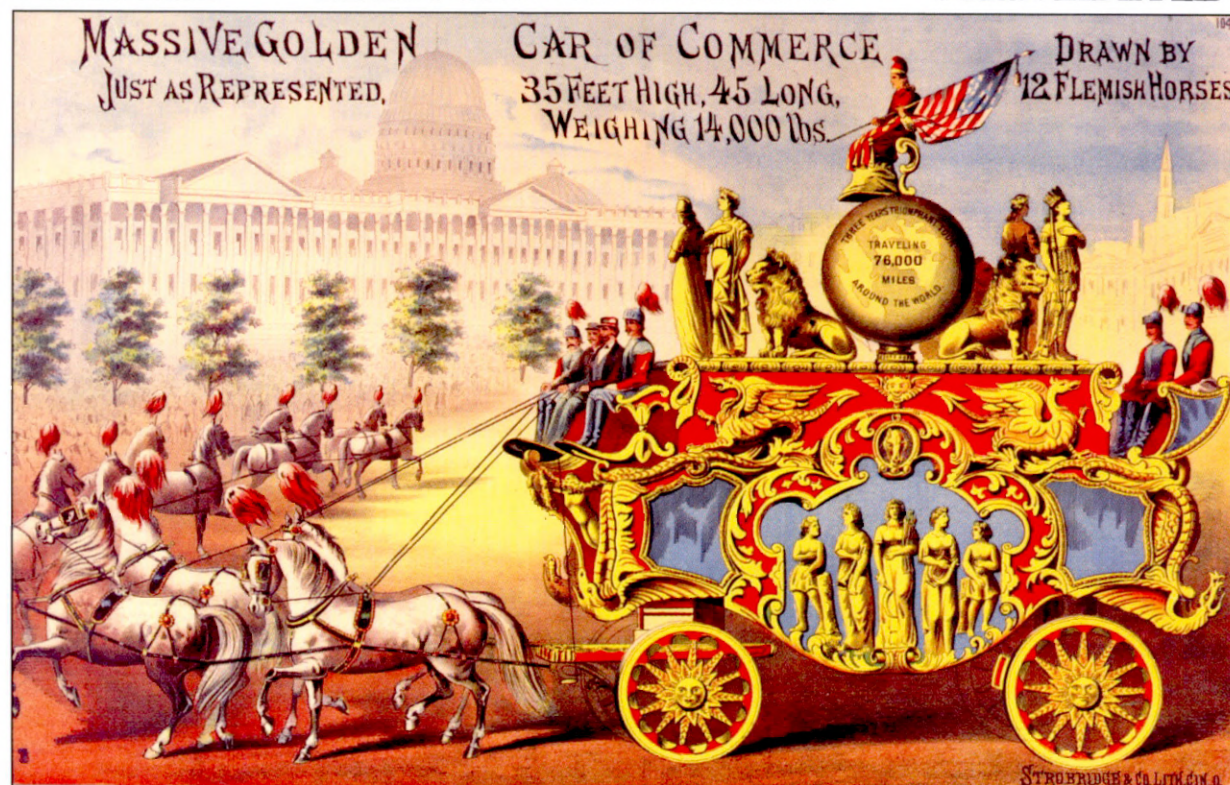


# BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

MAY-JUNE 1997

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# **Bandwagon**

THE JOURNAL OF  
THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 41, No. 3

May-June 1997

**FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR AND PUBLISHER**

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## **THIS MONTH'S COVER**

The lithograph on the cover was used by the Cooper & Bailey Great London Circus in 1880. It features the Chariot of Commerce, often called the Howes Globe tableau.

The wagon was brought to the United States by the Great London Circus in 1871.

It went to Cooper & Bailey in 1878 when that show bought the Howes equipment. In 1881 the tableau went to Barnum and London Circus when James A. Bailey, co-owner of Cooper and Bailey, combined with P. T. Barnum.

The lithograph is in the Circus World Museum collection.

## **DUES INCREASE**

The directors and officers of the Circus Historical Society met on June 5, 1997 in Northbrook, Illinois. A financial report on the fiscal year ending on April 30 was presented by the Secretary-Treasurer.

The cost of publishing, addressing and mailing the *Bandwagon* totaled \$25.37 per member or subscriber. The shortfall of receipts to expenses has been covered by conventions and auction income. The dues and subscriber rate has been \$19 for a number of years.

The board voted to increase the dues and subscriptions to \$25 in the United States and \$30 outside the U. S. The increased rates will be effective on the 1998 dues notices. New members will pay this amount when they join.

## **DUES NOTICES MAILED**

The Circus Historical Society dues and *Bandwagon* subscription notices were mailed in early May.

Your payment must be received by the Secretary-Treasurer by July 1. The July-August *Bandwagon* will not be mailed to those who have not their paid by that time. A \$2 late charge will be added to late pays.

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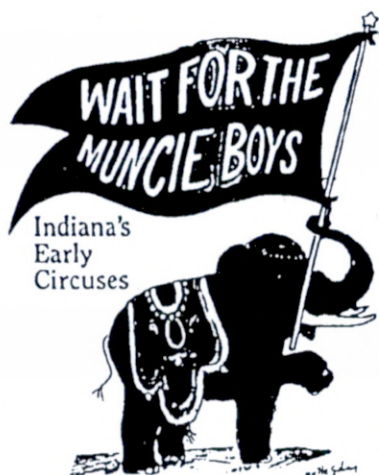
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1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
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*Foreword. This concludes the story of the Al F. Wheeler and Jethro Almond owned circuses which began in the March-April 1995 Bandwagon and was continued in the September-October 1996 issue.*

### 1933 Wheeler & Almond Circus

The Wheeler and Sautelle Circus was the title of the Eastern Circus Corporation show operated by Al F. Wheeler and Jethro Almond in 1932. Its quarters was in Lancaster, Pennsylvania when the new year arrived. Wheeler's office in Oxford, Pennsylvania was used to conduct the show's business. Some work took place at the former quarters in Albermarle, North Carolina, Almond's home, where shop and maintenance equipment was still intact.

First news of the show appeared in the January 26 *Billboard* which announced a new title would be used in 1933. Wheeler made the announcement from Salem, Massachusetts where he was attending a meeting of the state's Agricultural Fair Association. The article noted that Almond was assistant manager and a stockholder of the circus. It said that Wheeler anticipated New England fair bookings for the show as in the prior year. Wheeler said he was booking independent acts.

A week later *Billboard* headed a short piece, "Title changed because Almond knows the South."

"Lancaster, Pennsylvania, January 28. The principal circus unit of the Eastern Circus Corporation which for the last two years has operated as Wheeler & Sautelle Circus will from now on be known as the Wheeler & Almond Circus. The change was decided upon due to the fact that this show operates in considerable southern territory where the Sautelle title is unknown but where the name of Almond was been a household word for the last thirty years.

"Many additions and improvements are to be made to the outfit, and the arenic program will be kept up to the high standard of excellence set by these shows in the past. Very few changes are to be made in the personnel of the business staff either with the show or advance and most of the bosses that closed with the show last fall will be found on the job when the whistle blows for the spring opening."

# The Al F. Wheeler Jethro Almond Circuses

By Joseph T. Bradbury

The February 11 *Billboard* reported Wheeler was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania booking the Wheeler & Almond Circus at fairs. It was also noted that he had returned from various New England fair meetings bringing with him a number of fair contracts for the Wheeler & Almond and other units of the Eastern Circus Corporation. It is doubtful that any second unit operated in 1933. If one did, it received no press in *Billboard*. Likewise Wheeler and Almond played no stands in New England during the season. If any fair dates were booked they were evidently later cancelled.

The following week the *Billboard* carried additional news from the show when it was noted that Joseph F. Almond, Jethro's son, who was general agent of Wheeler & Sautelle in 1932, had been re-engaged for the same position with Wheeler & Almond. Two trucks and two autos were to be used in advance. An elaborate line of special paper was to be obtained. Other items said the Mettler Family Band had been signed and was to be enlarged to twelve pieces. Several novel features were to be introduced in the concert and all

Stock semi-trailer used by Wheeler & Almond in 1933. Pfening Archives.

new special music was being arranged for the show's opening spec, Humpty Dumpty in Fairyland.

The March 11 *Billboard* reported that Hal Silver, later famous as Hubert Castle, would be with the show until the opening of the fair season when his act was booked at a number of Eastern midways. The Simpsons, Ed and Josie,

were to be with the show presenting their impalement and mental acts in the annex as well as handling concessions.

In the following weeks the trade publication noted the Bob Peasley troupe, which had been with the Mighty Haag Circus in Florida during the winter, would join the circus presenting cannon ball juggling, ladder, perch and iron jaw numbers. Frances Peasley would be prima donna. Floyd and Ethel Kirtley would again be with the show, Floyd handling advertising banners and press and Ethel as a prima donna and in charge of chorus numbers in the concert. The after-show would be a big review, replacing the wild west which has been used for the past several years. She also was to ride menage. Al and Ollie Kadell were to be with the show, Al as solo clarinetist in the band and Ollie doing aerial numbers and appearing with the Golden Girls troupe in the performance.

In March newly elected President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was sworn in, bringing with him the New Deal. Soon the numerous alphabet soup agencies popped up, WPA, PWA, CCC, RFC etc., with all of them designed to pump government money into the economy. Indeed, expectations were





igh but the great depression of the 1930s was a stubborn beast to subdue. Although business conditions gradually improved, the depression didn't fully end until the advent of World War II. In 1933 optimism was actually greater than economic improvement, so much so that former circus owners returned to the business. George W. Christy came back with Lee Bros. in 1933 and Howard King with Rice Bros. a year later.

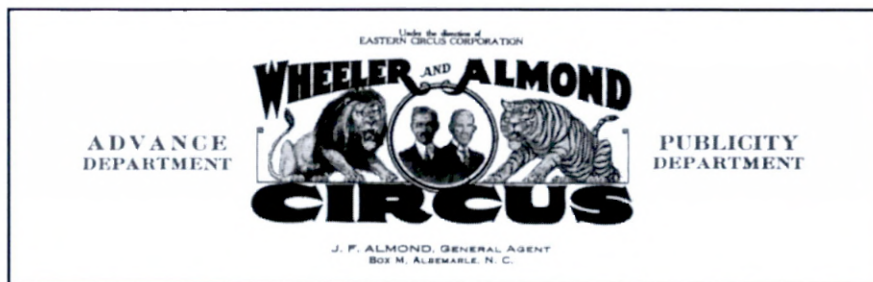
The April 1 *Billboard* reported that troupers who had closed with the Wheeler show in 1932 would scarcely recognize it on the lot in the spring. Many improvements had been made and the equipment was to be resplendent with its new coat of red and gold. Artist Bryan O'Connor, in charge of the paint shops, had nearly completed his work.

C. E. Springer had arrived from the old winter quarters at Albemarle, North Carolina, bringing with him a number of new truck bodies which had been built during the winter. These were in the paint shop, ready to receive their final touch of decorations. Two new advance trucks had also been decorated, loaded with paper and ready to move.

A week later the *Billboard* said the advance would include: Joseph P. Almond, general agent; Dixie Green, brigade agent; and William R. Longo and Frank Merrill, lithographers. Billposters posters on car number one were: Frank Mitchell and Jim Richards; car number two: John Dillon and Fred Egloff. Lloyd Kirtley would handle press back on the show.

The same April 8 *Billboard* noted that 1933 would be Wheeler and Almond's 30th year in show business. Many of the trucks were to be lettered "30th annual tour." "Thirty years ago this spring Al F. Wheeler started out from Schenectady, New

The Wheeler & Almond Circus on a lot in Shelby, North Carolina. Pfening Archives.



York with his Al F. Wheeler's New Model Shows. Starting in a very small way the outfit was enlarged and improved from year to year, finally becoming one of the largest wagon shows in the East.

"In 1910 a partnership was founded with Andrew Downie and for two seasons (sic) the Downie and Wheeler Shows toured. Then came the Wheeler Bros. Shows which operated for several seasons. In the spring of 1930 Wheeler and Almond combined, forming what is now known as the Wheeler and Almond Circus.

"A coincidence is that the same year Wheeler started out with the New Model Shows in the North. Almond started from Albemarle, North Carolina with a small overland show known as Jethro Almond's Bible Shows, the same being in the nature of a biblical picture show and panorama. This outfit later changed to a vaudeville show and continued as a dramatic show under canvas. In the later years Almond operated two of the largest canvas dramatic shows in the South. These continued until the close of the 1929 season."

The circus advertised in the April 29 *Billboard* for musicians on all instruments, feature acts for big show and chorus girls to double on swinging ladders.

The show opened the 1933 season in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on April 3 and moved to Oxford the following Monday. The *Billboard* did not publish an opening review.

Details of the show's physical equipment are sketchy. The Isaac Marks notes state it moved on 34 trucks and trailers, one vehicle being

Letterhead used by general agent Joe F. Almond in 1933. Pfening Archives.

a 24 foot prop truck. The circus had two light plants, one being new. Other vehicles included an air calliope and six cages of animals. The advance moved on two autos and two trucks, the latter having a red and gold color scheme. The big top was new. It appears the show had the same canvas lay out as the previous year, a 70 foot big top, with three 30s, and a 60 foot side showmenagerie with three 30s. There is no evidence the show had an elephant.

Only three railroad circuses went out in 1933. Missing was the 30 car Sells-Floto show; however, 5 cars were added to Hagenbeck-Wallace boosting its total to 40. John Ringling had lost control of his circus holdings in July of 1932. These were now controlled by his creditors with Samuel P. Gumpertz as general manager. The three Ringling-owned rail shows were Ringling-Barnum on 90 cars, Hagenbeck-Wallace on 40 cars and Al G. Barnes on 30 cars. None gave regularly scheduled parades, although Hagenbeck-Wallace gave a few marches on an experimental basis which were highly successful. Motorized shows included Downie Bros., Walter L. Main (later World Bros.), Sam B. Dill, Seils-Sterling, Barnett Bros., Schell Bros., Mighty Haag, Russell Bros., Seal Bros., Hunt's, Gentry Bros., Kay Bros., Wheeler & Almond, All American (later Cole & Rice), Tom Atkinson, Robson, Freckles Our Gang Comedy, Atterbury Bros., Sam Dock, Allen Bros., Lee Bros., Stevens Bros., Fisher Bros., Henry Bros., Olinger Bros., Harrington's Nickel Plate, and O'Neil Bros.

After a third Pennsylvania stand at Pawn Grove on May 2, Wheeler and Almond went into Maryland at Westminster before returning to the Keystone State for three additional dates. Next came a thirty-four stand tour of West Virginia beginning at Petersburg on May 8 and ending at Moundsville on June 15.







A sleeper semi-trailer on Wheeler & Almond in 1933. Circus World Museum collection.



The Wheeler & Almond big top canvas and pole semi-trailer in 1933. Circus World Museum collection.

An article in the June 10 *Billboard* dated Corydon, Iowa, June 2, said that Hal Silver had joined Seal Bros. Circus. He was one of the features of the show and special paper had been printed for billing. It had earlier been reported that Silver was to be with Wheeler & Almond.

Wheeler & Almond advertised in the June 24 *Billboard* for fast comedy acts, double clowning, side show features, candy butchers and young ladies for ladders and chorus. Four stands in Pennsylvania were listed.

The show returned to Pennsylvania at Waynesburg on June 16 and played 19 stands. The July 1 *Billboard* reported business was generally satisfactory for the prior three weeks with capacity night houses at many stands. The musical program was taken care of by the Mettier Family Band, now augmented to 12 pieces. The annex, under the direction of Ed Simpson, had a strong lineup and had enjoyed big business at nearly all stands. July and August were to be spent in the New England summer resorts. The show would fill a number of fair dates before starting on its southern tour. Evidently these plans were cancelled as the show played no New England stands.

A typically decorated semi-trailer in 1933. Pfening Archives.

A piece in the July 8 *Billboard* reported that when the show had played Canton, Pennsylvania, the former winter quarters of Charles Lee's Great London Shows, on July 8, ceremonies were held at the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Lee. Al F. Wheeler made his first side show opening at age 19 with the Lee show. Some of the show folks visited the old Lee quarters and found many lithographs in a good state of preservation.

A week later the show advertised again for a sober, reliable boss canvassman who could handle seats; and experienced seat men, "preference to those who can drive truck and candy butchers." A second ad in the same issue wanted to join immediately "versatile aerial team (Silverlakes write), single performers, ladies preferred, girls to work in chorus, ladders and side show, side show acts and features, candy butchers (Shierery join), novelty man, musicians on all instruments and experienced trap drummer to enlarge band. Long season. Only very low salaries considered." Six New Jersey stands were listed.

The New Jersey tour, starting July 10 at Washington and ending July 22 at Crawford, saw the show playing a total of 12 stands. Then it moved into New York at Greenwood Lake on July 24.

The July 22 *Billboard* headlined its coverage of the show: "Wheeler at N. J. resorts.

"A Southern tour will be made following the fair season. Two new trucks were received at Lakewood, New Jersey on July 15.

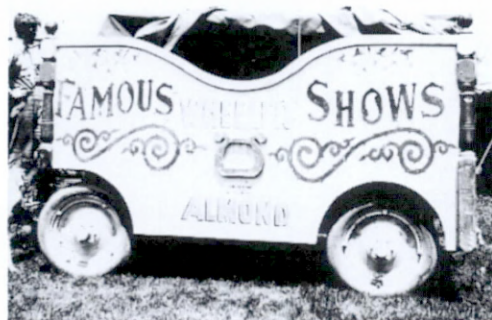
"After three weeks spent in Pennsylvania the show enjoyed uniformly good business. The Wheeler & Almond Circus is now at the shore resorts of New Jersey.

"A new truck, replacing the one wrecked earlier in the season, was received the past week. Another truck for the No. 2 light plant has been added. A new big top from Baker & Lockwood will arrive soon.

"July 4 was spent at Towanda, Pennsylvania where there was capacity business. Steward Charles Pease served the elaborate July 4th dinner."

The show played a dozen stands in New York state, then headed southward into Pennsylvania at New Milford on August 7. The August 5 *Billboard* carried several short notices about the show. The first noted that Edward J. Kelty, well known circus photographer, had recently visited a number of circuses including Lewis Bros, Jerry Burrell's Texas Ranch Show, Hunt's, Sam B. Dill's, Al's Wild West, and Wheeler & Almond's. About the last Kelty wrote: "I spent a

A small four wheeled trailer that may have been used with the band for up-town ballys. Pfening Archives.





pleasant day on the Wheeler & Almond Circus at Knightstown, New Jersey on July 13. The show has a new prop truck, 24 feet long, with a first class lettering and scrolling job. Al Conners is an artist with the brush as well as on the wire. Charles Pease has the cookhouse. Range, stock lockers, ice box, water tank are all on the truck. Ed Simpson and wife have the grab stand and work mentalist and knife throwing acts in the side show. Business is satisfactory."

During the show's quick six stand trip south through Pennsylvania there was little in the trade publication. It was now evident that any plans for a tour of New England were now out and no reasons were given. Factories thorough New England were in a very depressed condition, which may have been the reason.

A couple of short items appeared in the August 19 *Billboard*, the first in a report from Hughesville, Pennsylvania, August 9, that Al Kadell had replaced Ray Miettler as musical director. The Miettler Family Band closed to play fair dates. The Silverlakes, Archie and Billie, had left the Haag circus and joined Wheeler & Almond Circus for the fall and winter season.

Heading southward fast the show crossed Virginia in six dates, starting with The Plains on August 14 and concluding with Dillwyn, August 19. A long tour of North Carolina began at Rosboro on August 21 and ran continuously for 52 stands.

On October 20 the show went into South Carolina to play Dillon, then played back and forth between the two Carolinas the next week. A final stretch of North Carolina stands came at Gibson on October 28 and was concluded on November 11 at Bladenboro. Moving on the following Sunday and Monday the show took off on a long run to Reidsville, Georgia which was played November 14.

The most comprehensive article published during the season appeared in the October 21 *Billboard*: "Wheeler & Almond since entering the South the business of the show has averaged very satisfactory with capacity houses at many stands.

"Among the acts meeting with favor in the big show program are the Connor Trio, the Silverlakes, La-Belle-Ray Trio, the Peasleys, the Kirtleys, and the Golden Girls. In clown alley are Merwyn Ray, Charles Raimor, Bob Peasley, Ray Goodwin, and Bert Brewer. Al Ka-

dell has the big show band with 12 musicians and presents a neat program. Ed Simpson is manager of the annex with the following attractions: Lawson, strong man; San Rae, Mexican musician marvel; Naomi, sword box; Belmont's Bird Circus; the Simpsons, mentalists and impalement. Kirk Adams and Col. Elas are on the ticket boxes.

Herald used by Wheeler & Almond in 1933. Pfening Archives.

"The advance has Joe F. Almond as general agent; Fred Arnot, local contractor; and Dixie Green, manager advertising trucks. The physical end of the show is handled by C. E. Springer, superintendent; Fred Shuman, master of transportation; Charles Prophet, superintendent big show canvas; N. E. Donahue, first assistant; Bob Woodruff, side show canvas; Bill Van Bibber, boss props; Calvin Mitchell, ring stock; Coan Banch, in charge of animals.

"Recent visitors included Mrs. Charles Sparks and Charles Katz of Downie Bros. Circus; Walter L. Main, James Heron, and Cly Newton of Main-World Bros. Circus and members of the Barnes Family Shows. Al F. Wheeler has returned from a prospecting trip in the South. At the close of the regular tenting season, which has not yet been announced, Wheeler & Almond will put out a one ring show to play southern territory during the winter months."

In the same issue the show advertised for people for the fall and winter season starting October 30. Needed were versatile performers for big show, musicians, strong cornet, baritone, tuba, and others. Novelty acts for side show, electrician, candy butchers, "experienced circus cook to join on wire, low winter salaries." The show also offered for sale all of the 1933 tents at bargain prices. Cage animals were wanted as well as a small, gentle trained elephant. A week later a similar ad appeared. Six North and South Carolina stands were listed.

The November 4 *Billboard* told of

plans for the winter tour. "The management of Wheeler & Almond Circus informs that this coming Monday the big show performance will be cut to two ring proportion for the winter season, but most of the performers will be retained. There has been much building of house trailers the last several weeks for the winter tour.

"The large picture theater in Albemarle, North Carolina, formerly operated by Jethro Almond, has been transformed into a storehouse and work shop. Already there is activity in connection with next year's tour. According to Al F. Wheeler, a contract has been let for building several additional cages and trailers. An entirely new outfitting of canvas will be used."

After entering Georgia on November 11 the now-smaller show crossed the state in six stands. Alabama dates followed beginning at Prichard on November 21 and continuing with nine more stands. After Abbeville on December 1 the show returned to Georgia.

The December 2 *Billboard* carried an advertisement which must have been a shock to many of that publication's readers: "For sale. Half interest in Wheeler & Almond Circus. Finest equipped motorized show on the road. All canvas in fine condition. Big top brand new. Two light plants. Calliope. Plenty of trained stock. Cage animals etc. Will sell only to party agreeable to remaining partner, Jethro Almond. Address Al F. Wheeler, Box M, Albemarle North Carolina, or wire as per *Billboard* route."

In the meantime the show, after returning to Georgia from Alabama, played a total of 13 stands. The final stand of the season came at Midville on December 16.

A week after Wheeler's for sale advertisement the *Billboard* in its December 9 issue carried this ad, completely unrelated at the time to Wheeler's, but which would later prove to be significant: "Wanted motorized show equipment. Also trained stock. First class condition and



cheap. Jim Conley, 3807 Patton, Cincinnati, Ohio."

The December 16 *Billboard* advised that Wheeler & Almond was slated to close its season of 33 weeks Saturday of that week at Jaynesboro, Georgia and go into winter quarters at Albemarle, North Carolina. Actually, as mentioned earlier, the show closed a day earlier at Midville.

#### 1934

The February 24 *Billboard* broke this news: "Albemarle, South Carolina, February 7. Jethro Almond advises that his former business partner Al F. Wheeler in the Wheeler & Almond Circus has sold his interest to James Conley, well known showman, and that the show this year will be under a new banner, Almond & Conley 3 Ring Circus & Menagerie. Messrs Wheeler and Almond have been associated the last four years, formerly in Wheeler's New Model and Wheeler & Sautelle circuses.

"Mr. Conley is returning from a trip to Cincinnati where he prepared his equipment for shipment to winter quarters here. The show will be enlarged. Several new trucks and other items are under construction. Besides passenger cars, the motorized fleet will include 20 trucks. Almond informs the big top will be a 70 foot round top with three 30 foot middle pieces. The menagerie will be a 50 with two 30s, and the side show 60 by 30. The show is scheduled to open in April.

"Jethro Almond and James Conley are managers and Joe F. Almond, who has been with his father's show interests the last several years, will be general agent. Joe Almond advises that he has his advance staff lined up, including Dixie Green as brigade manager."

The Wheeler & Almond Circus ponies in Hightstown, New Jersey.



The report on the show's canvas was not correct. There was not a separate menagerie tent. The menagerie and side show had been combined in a single 60 by 30 foot tent.

Although it was never noted in the press Fred Conley was a one third partner in the circus, with the title of assistant manager.

The March 3 *Billboard* reported: "Having disposed of his interest in the Wheeler & Almond Circus, Al F. Wheeler informs that he will be connected with the Schell Bros. Circus the coming season in the capacity of side show manager.

"Schell Bros. Circus is reported being enlarged and improved in every department for its coming tour, and the annex department under the direction of Wheeler is planned to be one of the largest and finest outfits ever seen with a motorized show.

Not much background is available on James Conley, Almond's new partner. He had connections in vaudeville, fairs, celebrations and various other areas of show business. His wife Frieda and brother Fred were associated with him. How much equipment he accumulated by way of his advertisement in late 1933 and took to the new show is not known, nor are any details of what he paid Wheeler for his interest.

The March 10 *Billboard* in a report from Albemarle, North Carolina said

This Almond & Conley letterhead is printed in black with a red border. Pfening Archives.

that the winter quarters of the Almond & Conley Circus was a scene of activity. Five new truck bodies were being built and the other trucks and equipment were being put in shape. The new trucks included three 24 foot semi trailers. In the ring barns John White was breaking a new pony drill and a riding dog and monkey act. Fred Conley was rehearsing two pony drills. Among features of the show were to be the acts of the Conleys. Frieda Conley was to work the acts formerly in vaudeville known as Conley's Comedy Circus. Little Buster, a midget horse, was being readied for a new act. The show would carry 70 head of horses, ponies, and menagerie animals. (Who knows now many very small varmints could be included in this count, rabbits, chickens, dogs etc.; however, 70 head of horses, ponies etc.; seems far too many for a show this size. Half, or even a third that many is more realistic.) Brownie Silverlake and his wife were to work with Fred and Frieda Conley, making their fifth consecutive season with this combination of acts. Conley and superintendent Springer had just returned from Oxford, Pennsylvania with a truck-load of equipment that was in storage there. The show was to open the middle of April.

The March 17 *Billboard* had this advertisement: "Elephant wanted. State lowest salary, musicians for band, all instruments. Almond & Conley Circus, Albemarle, North Carolina." There is no evidence that the show had an elephant.

The April 21 *Billboard* reported: "The indoor circus, auspices American Legion, staged here this week in the Armory Auditorium has played to capacity audiences. It closes tonight.

"Last night one of the featured per-





James Conley co-owner of the 1934 Circus. Pfening Archives.

formers, Mrs. Fred Conley, was severely injured when she fell about 20 feet during the aerial iron-jaw act.

"According to reports she received a fracture of the right knee, broken nose and broken jaw. Mrs. Conley's husband is also here as equestrian director and her brother-in-law, James Conley, is master of ceremonies. Her little daughter rides a pony in the program. Others in the circus include: Cedora, Girl in the Golden Globe; Bee Jung, aerialist; H. S. Beatley and his band; Aerial Lakes; Brownie Silverlake and Company; Colonel Mack; Cramor and Company; Dynamite Bessie; Freckles and Buddy; the Pressleys; Schoda Sisters; Madame Francis; Miss Helen and Conley's Circus of ponies and dogs."

It was now April and the 1934 season was at hand. There were once again only three railroad circuses, all Ringling owned, but there were six more cars of circus. Hagenbeck-Wallace, under management of Jess Adkins, was enlarged to 46 cars and presented daily a grand street parade on a scale not seen since 1920. Ringling-Barnum traveled on 90 cars and Al G. Barnes on 30.

Motorized shows included Downie Bros., Sam B. Dill-Tom Mix (later Tom Mix), Barnett Bros., Russell Bros., Seils-Sterling, Mighty Haag, Lewis Bros., Gorman Bros., Schell Bros., Curtis-Gregg, Pollie Bros., Almond & Conley, Gentry Bros., Hunt's, Seal Bros., Beverly Bros., Conroy Bros., Kay Bros., Silver Bros., Rice Bros., Lee Bros., Miliken Bros., Marlow's Mighty, Ber-

nard Bros., Olinger Bros., Star Bros., Cole & Cooper, E. A. Harrington-Pawnee Bill, Famous Robbins, Dugan Bros., Schultz King of Beasts, Atterbury Bros., Cole & Rogers, Flower Bros., Henry Bros., Robinson Bros. and Tol Bros. A number of larger trucks paraded.

Almond & Conley's performance seems to have been somewhat stronger than the previous year, mainly because of the Conley acts. Physically the size was about the same. The circus had been gradually replacing older straight-bed trucks with 24 foot semis-trailers, so that by 1934 the appearance of the motorized equipment was vastly different from that of the initial 1930 season. There is a shortage of 1934 photos but it is assumed the trucks were well painted and decorated.

The show opened its season at its home base in Albemarle on April 20-21. After one additional stand in the state it moved into South Carolina for fifteen stands starting in Bennettsville on April 24, and concluding with Piedmont, May 10. Fountain was a two day stand, May 4-5. A return to North Carolina came at Kings Mountain, May 11.

A review of the show was printed in the May 13 *Billboard*: "Almond & Conley Circus which is billed to exhibit in Honea Path, South Carolina on Monday has been having satisfactory business considering some bad weather conditions since its opening at Albemarle, North Carolina, April 20, according to the management.

"The performance presented in three rings and on a track opens with a beautiful spec titled America--all performers and animals around the track, three prima donnas mounted

Newspaper ad used in 1934. Circus World Museum collection.

# FARMVILLE

## WEDNESDAY 17th

### OCTOBER

Show Lot Rear Pitt Gin Company

## ALMOND & CONLEY

# CIRCUS

**NORTH CAROLINA'S OWN SHOW**

Sensational Free Act on Circus Grounds

**MLLE. ANNETT** IN HER DEATH DEFYING AEROPLANE SPIN

**ADULTS 25°**

DOORS OPEN 1-7 P. M.

**CHILDREN 15°**

PERFORMANCE 2-5 P. M.

on horses, girls in ballet in center, and pretty costumes--new and designed by Frieda Conley and Ethel Kirtley. Following the spec, consecutively; swinging ladders, Misses Peasley, Cox, Yudor, Rosie and Helen Silverlake. Rope spinning, Rossi brothers and Brownie Silverlake. Acrobats, Tudor Family (4) and Schoda Sisters. Pony drill by Jim Conley. The Peasleys, high carrying perch. Clowns, headed by Brownie Silverlake. Silverlake Trio, comedy Roman rings. Clowns, with Charles Ramer and company in walkarounds. Iron jaw, Frances Peasley. Menage, Ethel Kirtley and Morgan Tolar, riders. Unridable pony and clowns. Boots, liberty horse on track. Frances Trio, cannon-ball juggling. Spanish webs, Helen Fisher, Velma Brosion, and Frances Peasley. Monkey high dives presented by Brownie Silverlake and Jim Conley. Pony drills presented by Ethel Kirtley, Lloyd Kirtley, and Bill Cox. Clowns. Trained goats by Bob Peasley. The Tudors, comedy acrobats. Riding dogs and monkeys, Jim Conley, Morgan Tolar, and Lloyd Kirtley. Carver brothers, trampoline act. There is a musical comedy concert which features the Dancing Tudors, the Kirtleys, and the Hollywood Steppers, a chorus of eight girls.

"Music is furnished by Higgins' uniformed band of nine pieces. Lloyd Kirtley is equestrian director. Mrs. Almond has charge of reserved seats. Jim Conley is on the front door and Jethro Almond is in the ticket wagon. Earl Backer is handling the merchants tickets on the advance. The Gregory family has the side show."

The mention of the show using merchants tickets indicated a switch from an earlier policy against them. It was probably inevitable. Many showman familiar with motorized circuses in the great depression have said the merchants ticket plan was the salvation of the small overland show.

North Carolina was crossed in three stands and the show moved into Virginia at Martinsville on May 15. Fifteen dates were played in the Old Dominion with one day spent enroute on a lengthy move. A single stand was played in West Virginia in Charleston on June 4. The circus then began a tour of Maryland which lasted a little over three weeks. It began at Middletown, June 5 and concluded with Snow Hill on June 25.

The June 9 *Billboard* had the exciting news that the Almond & Conley had been booked for the season



at Wildwood Pier in New Jersey. The story out of Cincinnati, dated June 8, said that Bob Morton of the National Producing Company informed the *Billboard* that the complete Almond & Conley Circus had been booked to exhibit on the pier at Wildwood, New Jersey throughout the resort season from June 30 to Labor Day.

"Morton further advises that a beautiful spec and new costumes are being arranged for the engagement. The motor trucks will be quartered at the extreme end of the pier which is 500 feet long. Seats for several thousand people are being erected and the front of the pier is being transformed into an attractive circus entrance."

This advertisement appeared a week later: "Ocean Pier, Wildwood, New Jersey open June 30 to September 2. Wanted. One more high class attraction. Indian Village or real Plantation Show, or attraction of merit. Will sell. Frolic ride. Will buy single elephant act, two lions. National Producing Company, Inc. 1327 Spruce, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania."

No details about the financial arrangement made between Morton and Almond & Conley are known. Probably it was a regular lease arrangement with Morton adding additional acts and/or animals.

Bob Morton was a pioneer in the indoor circus field, having been in that business since the mid 1920s. He also produced shows for fairs, celebrations, and in this instance, for an amusement pier. It would be interesting to learn if he was able to secure an elephant act for the Almond & Conley's engagement at Wildwood. A few years later Morton teamed up with George Hamid to form the Hamid-Morton Circus which became one of the leading producers of indoor circuses. That title persisted almost to today. Elephant listings do not indicate Morton owned any elephants as early as 1933, but a few years later Hamid-Morton had its own herd.

This article appeared in the June 16 *Billboard*: "Although the third show to visit Leesburg, Virginia, on June 1, within the month Almond & Conley Circus had them on the ground when it exhibited here recently. The show is presented in three rings; admission 25 cents with 15 cents for reserves. Circus fans endorsed the show because of its cleanliness.

"Program opens with a beautiful spec, The May Queen, with excellent



Jethro Almond as pictured in the 1935 *Circus Magazine*. Pfening Archives.

costuming effects [this is a change of title from that was originally reported].

"Featured in the program are the Peasley Trio, cannon-ball act; the Silverlakes, Roman rings; Mrs. Ethel Kirtley, menage act; the Masons and Tudors, acrobats; Carwell brothers, trampoline; Conley's ponies together with trained monkeys, goats; Dynamite Bessy, bucking mule and Dan Mooney, high diving monkey. Side show is under direction of Mr. and Mrs. Mason and daughters who present a novel demonstration of trained monkeys, menagerie, and a reptilian lecture. This was a change of management.

"The show as stated in last issue goes to Wildwood Park for ten weeks under the management of Bob Morton. After conclusion of the pier arrangement it will continue its tour for the remainder of the season."

First news after the shows opening at Wildwood Pier on June 30 came in the July 14 *Billboard*: "The Ocean Pier under lease of National Producing Company with Bob Morton as the general manager opened last Saturday auspiciously. The following days, including the July 4th had heavy business.

"The Almond & Conley Circus, which is booked as the circus attraction, presents an excellent program with plenty of clown numbers and other attractions for both grownups and kiddies. Two shows are given on weekdays and three or more on Saturday and Sunday. Business on the Fourth of July was particularly heavy, making it necessary for almost continuous performances.

"Other features on the pier are a cabaret with revue numbers, circus side show, several concessions and rides.

"Prospects are for a most successful season as this class of entertainment is something different for this resort. Bob Bennett's orchestra and floor show are proving a popular attraction in the cabaret."

A search through the trade publication in all sections has failed to turn up a detailed listing of acts presented in the performance so it is unknown what additional numbers Morton may have added. In August it was announced the show's program was changed for the second month of the Wildwood engagement.

Labor Day, September 3, was the final day at Wildwood. The regular canvas tour resumed after four days to get reorganized and running at Snow Hill, Maryland on September 8. According to the season's route sheet this was the last date played prior to Wildwood back on June 30. If all this is correct this would be a repeat stand.

*Billboard* reported that Al F. Wheeler spent several days with the show while it was at the pier. The September 15 *Billboard* reported: "Almond & Conley Circus closed at Wildwood's Ocean Pier Labor Day after a most successful season of ten weeks. Sunday and Labor Day were the biggest days of the season, it being necessary on Sunday to give continuous shows.

"While at the pier the entire show was overhauled and repainted. It left for their Southern dates under canvas. Al F. Wheeler joined the show as general representative and also furnishes the side show."

The same issue also contained this advertisement: "Almond & Conley Circus want for side show inside man or team doing several acts. Girl for sword box, experienced candy butchers. Simpsons wire if at liberty. Address Al F. Wheeler. Waverly, Virginia, September 17; Smithfield, Virginia, 18; Gatesville, North Carolina, 19; Very long season."

The show went into Virginia at Chincoteague on September 12 with eight more stands in the state following. A long tour of North Carolina started at Gatesville, September 20, and didn't end until Maxton, October 24, a total of 30 stands. The circus moved into South Carolina at Society Hill the following day; however, it returned to North Carolina a day later at Jefferson which was the final stand in its home state. Seven dates in South Carolina came next, the fi-



nal being at Johnston on November 3. A march through Georgia followed. The Carolinas as well as Georgia were filled with circuses in the fall of 1934. There was labor unrest in many of the textile towns of the region as unions attempted to organize workers. In South Carolina police killed a number of strikers, and in Georgia the national guard called out to quiet the violence. There were no reports of Almond & Conley being in any of the troubled towns, but several shows were.

The October 6 *Billboard* had this advertisement: "Almond & Conley Circus. Wants musicians on all instruments. Wire. Versatile performers. And for side show, inside man or team doing several acts. All state low winter salary. Roseboro (Wednesday), Dunn (Thursday), Lillington (Friday). All North Carolina."

A report in the October 13 *Billboard* dated Dunn, North Carolina, October 5, stated: "Business with the Almond & Conley Circus through Virginia and the Carolinas had been satisfactory, including capacity night houses according to an executive with the show. Henry F. Russell finished repainting all of the parade equipment which now presents a fine appearance." There is no evidence that the show was presenting a street parade on a regular basis; however, it did have an air calliope which could have been used for downtown bally.

"Among the big show acts meeting with favor are the Conley Trio, Riddle Sisters, Brownie Silverlake Company, Rossi family, Ethel Kirtley, and Belmont's goats and dancing horses, the latter handled by Captain Morgan Toler. Fred Conley has the big show band of ten pieces. Side show is handled by Frank Belmont with the following attractions: Prof. Edward Brown, magic and ventriloquism; Belmont's Bird Circus presented by Jennie Olsen; Nancy Rossi, sword box; Ray Burton, Punch & Judy; six cages of animals. Bob Russell and Alson Wheeler, ticket sellers." Frank Belmont was a name often used by Al F. Wheeler.

"The business staff: Jethro Almond and Jim Conley, owners and managers; M. L. Kirtley, assistant manager and legal adjuster; C. E. Springer, superintendent; Earl D. Backer, contracting agent with J. H. Welch in charge of advertising brigade; Jack Riddle, advertising banners. The season will extend well into the winter months with a smaller unit continuing the tour."

The show advertised in the Oc-

tober 20 *Billboard* for "a candy butcher, inside man for side show doing several acts. Address Al F. Wheeler." Four dates in North Carolina were listed.

The October 27 *Billboard* reported some unexpected news: "Jethro Almond has purchased the interest of James Conley in the Almond & Conley Circus. The information was provided to the *Billboard* by Almond, who further advised that Conley returns to the fair acts field with his aerial acts booked in advance.

"The Almond & Conley partnership was formed last winter. Early this season the motorized show played a string of one day dates northward through Atlantic coast states and located for the summer at Ocean Pier, in Wildwood, New Jersey, after which it returned to the road routed southward. At present it is playing one day stands in North Carolina."

The next week, the November 3 *Billboard* contained this ad: "Jethro Almond Circus wants to join on wire. Versatile team. Circus performers. Strong cornet, experienced circus trap drummer. Merwyn Ray, wire." Six dates in South Carolina were listed.

Ironically as the show continued its 1934 fall and early winter tour of the deep South the two original partners were together again. Jethro Almond was sole owner, but in addition to handling the side show, Al F. Wheeler also seems to have provided a number of acts for the big show performance. Almond and Wheeler made a good team.

Why Jim Conley bailed out so

Small herald used by Almond in 1935. Pfening Archives.

quickly is not known. A good guess might be that a daily route through small towns over often inadequate roads didn't suit his sensibilities. He no doubt preferred longer stands in larger places as fairs provided. In the South in those days there were two classes of folks, city and country. City folk were known as "pavement pounders" and country as "clod knockers." Almond was definitely a clod knocker, and Conley probably a pavement pounder.

The November 17 *Billboard* said that the Almond Circus was playing to very satisfactory business in South Carolina. Belmont's trained animals were featured on the program. Carl Woolrich, who had the big show band with ten musicians, was putting up a very creditable musical program. A week later *Billboard* reported the Connor Trio had joined the show for the winter season.

After 12 stands in Georgia, which were concluded at Pavo on November 17, the troupe ventured into Florida for almost six weeks of dates. A three day stand was played at the Lacoochee fair from December 10 to 12, the last two days of which were lost due to the lot being under water.


The Sunshine State tour began at Mayo and concluded at White Springs on December 25. Included were four days at a park in Tampa and three days enroute between some stands.

The December 1 *Billboard* noted that Jack Riddle, an Almond employee, reported that the show was doing nice business in Florida. Annetta Riddle's foot revolve was used as a free act. The Connor Trio had joined with a wire act and two slides, one by the Missus and the other by Al. Jethro Almond and Riddle visited the Downie Bros. Circus closing stand at Thomaston, Georgia.

J. Tracy wrote in the December 15 *Billboard* that he caught the Almond Circus at Traverse, Florida on Thanksgiving Day. He said that matinee did poorly in Florida but the show's night business was very good. "He said that the ticket wagon doesn't have much of a play until Al F. Wheeler turns them out of the side show. He really entertains them and tunes their appetites for the big show. Almond's big show performance was very pleasing, and the wardrobe is neat and clean and a little spec starts show off in nice style. Trucks are being gone over and management has a real artist on the job."

A final note from the show appeared in the December 22 *Billboard* stated the Riddles closed and mo-

**COMING!**  
— UNDER BIG TENT —  
**JETHRO  
ALMOND CIRCUS**



**TRAINED ANIMAL EXHIBITION**



tored home to Poplar Bluff, Missouri from Davenport, Florida.

After the Florida dates the show returned to Georgia at Fargo, on December 26. After four additional stands in the Peach State the season closed at West Green on December 31. A run to the Albemarle, North Carolina, followed thus ending this long and unusual season.

### 1935

January and February 1935 passed with no *Billboard* comment on the Jethro Almond Circus. The March 9 *Billboard* reported that the Hunt Circus had acquired the equipment and animal acts from the Almond & Conley Circus as well as trucks and other property used by Al F. Wheeler on Schell Bros. Circus in 1934. The Hunt show was to be further enlarged by the addition of three more new trucks, a new calliope and several new parade floats as a street parade would be featured. Wheeler was to have charge of the side show and concessions, and Dixie Green had been engaged to take charge of the advertising trucks.

To that point nothing had appeared in the trade publication concerning the plans of Jethro Almond for the new season. However, the March 30 *Billboard* finally reported that the Jethro Almond Circus would be transported on 15 trucks and cars with seven 24 foot semi trailers. There was to be a new semi trailer for advance. J. F. Almond would again will be general agent.

Almond advertised in the following week's *Billboard* for circus musicians and a family band. The show was to open in Albemarle on May 4.

Nearly two months passed before further reports from the show appeared. The 1935 circus season had arrived. It would prove to be a big one. Business had greatly improved over the previous season, especially among the railroad circuses. Hagenbeck-Wallace had enjoyed very strong business in 1934. Optimism was high, so much so that Jess Adkins, who had managed Hagenbeck-Wallace; and Zack Terrell, who had managed the last Sells-Floto show in 1932, secured financial backing to frame a brand new 35 car railer titled Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus. It would be the first non-Ringling owned rail circus since 1931.

Other rail shows on the road in 1935 were Ringling-Barnum, 90 cars; Hagenbeck-Wallace-Forpaugh-Sells, 40 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars;



This full page Jethro Almond illustration appeared in the 1935 *Circus Magazine*. Pfening Archives.

and Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty, 35 cars. Cole paraded daily, but Hagenbeck-Wallace presented a march only in a few selected cities, much on the order of 1933. Motorized circuses included Downie Bros., Tom Mix, Russell Bros., Barnett Bros., Gorman Bros., Seils-Sterling, Lewis Bros., Mighty Haag, Kay Bros., Seal Bros., Orange Bros., Schell Bros., Hunt's, Walter L. Main, Famous Robbins, Bays Bros. (later Rice Bros.), Bailey Bros., Atterbury Bros., Bryan Bros., Fowler Bros., Milliken Bros., Jethro Almond, Siebrand Bros., Silver Bros., Rooney Bros., Conroy Bros., Jones Bros., Card's, J. J. Evans, Norris Bros., Barney Bros., and Beers Bros. It would be the last season many of the larger mud shows paraded.

Jethro Almond's show used the *Circus Magazine* for the first and only time. A nice two page spread appeared in the publication which was used by a number of circuses and carnivals.

Part of it read "Thirty-five years ago, at the turn of the century, Jethro Almond, by dint of hard work and frugality amassed the fortune of \$100 in the short space of two years. Having heard that money makes money and being possessed of a desire to be independent, he took this capital and started in show business.

"His first show was a small picture

outfit. The first few stands were made with an old one-horse wagon bought at a county sale for \$4.65 on credit. Later a two horse wagon was purchased, and the first season's show was given in schools and churches.

"For its second season another wagon was added and a small tent with stands of three days and a week. The third year a third wagon was added, and the little tent was made ten feet longer to accommodate the crowds. At the close of the 1902 season all wagons were sold and a small railroad car was purchased. With this equipment the show continued for a number of years with moving pictures and vaudeville. Bible pictures were featured.

"Later a second railroad car was added. In 1916 the outfit had two shows touring, each with two cars. C. F. Springer was in charge of the second show. At the present time Mr. Springer has been with the Almond show for twenty-five years.

"Because of the high railroad rates prevailing at the end of World War I, the cars were discarded, and the show sent out on trucks. It continued with vaudeville and dramatic offerings until the close of the 1929 season, when a circus partnership was formed with Al F. Wheeler.

"The circus was then known successively as Wheeler's New Model Show, Wheeler & Sautelle, and Wheeler & Almond. For four years this arrangement was pleasant and profitable. In the fall of 1933 Wheeler sold his interest to Jim Conley, a man well known wherever fairs and such attractions are held. Now Mr. Conley has sold out his interest to Almond who is the sole owner and manager.

"This year the show is one of the best equipped and completely motorized shows on the road, carrying a company of high salaried artists, each a star in his or her line. The admission charge is small, and the show is top notch.

"Here is a list of some of the performers with the show this season: LaBelle-Ray troupe in society acrobatic and clowning; the Gordons, unsupported Roman ladder performers; Professor Keely, with his troupe of educated ponies, dogs, and monkeys; as well as many other first class attractions. Mrs. Almond takes an active part with Mr. Almond in the show."

The show opened the season as advertised on May 4 at its home base in Albemarle, and played one more



stand in North Carolina before going into South Carolina for seven dates at Chesterfield, May 14-15. The show took a day enroute to move northward all the way to Virginia with the initial stand at Gretna, May 17.

Eleven stands were played in Virginia followed by three in Maryland. The show entered Pennsylvania at Littlestown on June 3, which was followed by nine additional dates in the Keystone State. East Prospect saw the show two days, June 14-15.

The June 1 *Billboard* reviewed the show briefly: "The Jethro Almond Circus opened on in Albemarle, North Carolina on May 4. Attendance as fair in the afternoon and big at night.

"The program. grand entry; the Gordons, unsupported ladders; Jim the juggling clown on rolling globe; Marie Campbell and Company, iron jaw and swinging ladder, and Peggy Dill, iron jaw and swinging ladder; Carver brothers, trampoline and Roman rings; comedy acrobats; six pony drill; Ethel Kirtley, prima donna and menage; comedy acrobats with balancing board; Melvin Ray troupe with two acts. M. L. Kirtley is equestrian director and A. Lee Hinckley has the following bandsmen, Carl Woolrich, Ed Kriebel, G. Money, Frank Stevens, Dr. Tripp, Ed Valley, and George Gould.

"J. A. McIntyre, Frank McIntyre and Edwin Brinkley have juice joints and novelties. Doc Cook has the ball game."

From this review it is apparent the performance was smaller than that presented the prior year when Conley's acts were present. In all probability the show appears to have been about same size as the one Almond operated in the late fall and early winter of 1934. Towns

Sleeper semi-trailer used by the Almond show in 1935. Circus World Museum collection.



played on the route were also smaller. There was no mention of a side show.

An advertisement in the June 22 *Billboard* disclosed the whereabouts of James Conley, who had been in partnership with Almond for much of the 1934 season: "Circus acts wanted. Features, troupes and elephants. State lowest salaries. Two weeks June 24 and July 1 weeks. Tierneys wire. Conley's Circus, care Endy Bros. Shows [carnival], Tamqua, Pennsylvania this week."

The Almond circus returned to Maryland at Manchester on June 17, then played Reisterstown, June 18-19; Dayton, June 20; and Ashton, June 21-22., which was the final stand of Almond's show as a circus. A new format was adopted, the exact nature of which is somewhat confusing. One report states it became a tent movie with a few circus acts.

A *Billboard* note some weeks later said that Bob Russell was then with the Kridello show after the Jethro Almond Circus combined with T. R. Marshall of medicine show fame, which suggests yet another format. Whatever kind of show the troupe was, it moved into Virginia where it remained for more than a month. The show played a week at Tyson's Corner from June 24 to 9, followed by Bailey's Cross Road, July 1 to 6. It was next in Alexandria for two full

The personnel and two cars of the c-1910 Jethro Almond moving picture company. Pfening Archives.

weeks, then Ashburn another week, July 22-27. Two weeks were played in Maryland at Oxen Hill, followed by eight days at Indian Head. Returning to Virginia a repeat date of seven days was played in Tyson's Corner. The show stayed in Virginia for the remainder of the season with one and two week engagements.

During mid-summer 1935 Virginia experienced an epidemic of polio, then called infantile paralysis. The larger shows fled the state in droves. The August 3 *Billboard* noted that the Jethro Almond show played Ashburn, Virginia instead of Manassas the prior week due to the town being closed by infantile paralysis. Almond said the state was generally closed and that he was staying back in small places until told to stop.

Almond's final stand in 1935 was at Gretna, Virginia, December 2-7, which was followed by a run to his Albemarle quarters.

Al F. Wheeler continued for several years operating or managing side shows until his retirement in the late 1930s or early 1940s. He was in the real estate business in his home town of Oxford, Pennsylvania until his death at age 82 on May 16, 1957.

Jethro Almond continued to operate a tent show until 1949 according to some sources. He also owned a movie theater in Society Hill, South Carolina, according to a story in the Albemarle paper in 1955. This was his last fling in show business. Almond died, at age 90 on October 17, 1959 in Albemarle, North Carolina.

The author thanks the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin for valuable information and photos provided for this series of articles.





Chang Reynolds and Gordon Borders interviewed Bob and Ova Thornton on May 9, 1964. Thornton was an animal trainer for Al G. Barnes from 1909 until 1923 when he served as equestrian director. He moved to the John Robinson Circus in 1924. He returned to Barnes in the early 1930s where he was again equestrian director in 1934. The original tape is in the Circus World Museum.

Reynolds: Tell us about your work in the movies?

Thornton: I remember one film I worked on. The location was Santa Monica Canyon. I was working a black bear. Santa Monica Canyon wasn't very much in those days. It was just a creek and at one end there was a school.

Some actor and Mabel Norman sat on a log. He was supposed to be a French count. The actor was telling Mabel Norman how brave he was saying he'd been on African safari and he had shot big game. About that time the bear came up behind him and he takes off. He was supposed to run up a tree with the bear behind him. When he gets up so far then he was supposed to stop and do a lot of mugging to the bear. Instead he got scared. The bear was after him and he kept going straight up the tree. The cameraman says, "Well, why didn't you atop?" He said, "Stop nothing, that bear was after me." I worked for a day and a half before I could get that bear to do the same thing. The bear really done just perfect the first time.

We tried what they call shots along the edge, like a silhouette. They didn't call 'em silhouettes but on that order. A skyline picture, but I couldn't make the bear stay on the edge of the cliff. At the mouth of Santa Monica Canyon in those days was a Jap fishing village. That's where they had that last fall of the cliff. The Jap fishing village was there before the highway went through there. There was a dirt road that went out to Inceville. They had a horse and buggy that took the people out there. Well, it was a team and a wagon that took people out to Inceville. That's about where Topanga Canyon is now. It may have been Topanga Canyon, I don't know, but they called it Inceville. They done a lot of work up there [referring to motion picture companies]. I worked up there with a

## An Interview with BOB THORNTON

couple of Russian brown bears I had. That was when 101 Ranch first came out here. They done an Indian picture and this Indian picture ran about thirty Indians, real Indians, you know, from the 101 Ranch. I took the big bear out there in a wagon. I told 'em, I said, "Better stand back, when I tie this bear out he's going to run after you." He might get one of you." He would chase 'em you know, but he wouldn't hurt 'em. He'd maul 'em. So I took the bear out and right behind them was a drop-off about 50 feet. They all fell over it backing up away from the bear pit dug about 8 feet deep and covered with brush and I built a trail of doughnuts up to it.

Robert Thornton on Al G. Barnes in 1934. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



The bear would walk up there and I had a half a loaf of bread out in the middle of the pit. He wouldn't go for it. So about the third time they he got full of doughnuts. I took the collar and chain off him. He took off. When he came to the pit he run around it and

me chasing him I ran into it. I went down there that 8 feet into a puddle of water. We worked about three days.

Another time in the story this Indian princess was supposed to be in love with two braves. She was to marry the bravest one. The brave one was supposed to go out and get the bear single handed. He was a Russian bear and I used to wrestle him. Well, I had Indian makeup on, and I'm crawling with the rest of the Indians. I got the bear down in the creek, eating candy off of a rock, looks like he's drinking. I get up there to attract his attention. I said, "Bill," Bill turned around and here he came and knocked the headfeathers off. They were something new to him.

Reynolds: That was the bear you wrestled on the Barnes show wasn't his name Bill?

Thornton: Yeah. And then the next time he crawled up there and some guy behind shot off a gun. And up the hill Bill went--me after him. I threw my arms around his neck and rolled down into the creek with him. It took a couple of days to get that.

Reynolds: Mrs. Thornton asked me if I had seen Bill the wrestling bear and I said that I had just heard about him. I asked her if they used several men to wrestle him.

Mrs. Thornton: Bob broke him.

Thornton: I broke him in 1909. I broke in two or three of 'em to wrestle him.

Mrs. Thornton: Didn't a man who worked the polar bears, his name was Clarence, used to wrestle him?

Thornton: Yeah, I forget his name. I broke in two or three of 'em. To work bears, you know, you have to handle 'em. They muss your clothes up, tear 'em off. Louis Roth when he first came on the Barnes Show, he had been a lion trainer with Bostock. Al G. brought him on at that time. . . I was about the only trainer around there. I was working about nine acts. I just broke a lion and tiger act. Two lions and two tigers. That was in the fall of 1909. Al G. says, "What we going to give Louie to work?" I'd always



been trying to get rid of these bears, so I said, "Well, give him the bears." There was one Tibet bear in there . . . walked a ball on her hind legs. If you didn't watch her she'd fall off the ball on top of you and undress you. So the first time I put Louie in with the bears, I showed him what they done, and the old man come in and . . . what was her name, I forget that bear's name now . . . anyhow, I left the Tibet bear out. The old man come in and says "where is so and so." I said, "Well, I thought I'd leave her out the first time." Then, he said, "put her in." So I told Louie the next time well put the Tibet bear in.

Mrs. Thornton: Rosie, honey.

Thornton: Yeah. So the next time I put Rose, the Tibet bear in. First he pushed the ball up to her on the seat. She just got on the ball, stood on her hind legs and walked toward him. She got half way across the arena and undressed Louie. That was the finish of that.

Reynolds: Did you break the polar bears?

Thornton: No. Louie says I'm a lion trainer. I didn't know nothing about bears. Well, I always figured that anyone that could train a lion could train a bear. I trained anything. I didn't know any better.

Well, to me they were all animals—they were all wild. I broke a wild boar act. That was in 1923. I worked them for one year. In the fall of '23 I left.

Reynolds: How many did you have?

Thornton: Five. What I mean they were wild. I worked them one ring. I had one. I'd hit him and run, I'd run around the ring and he'd run after me. I'd run behind him and cross over the seat and he'd plant his foot on the box and bark. I used to think to myself that some day he wasn't going to stop.

I tried to train a . . . what's those things I had down in Texas.

Mrs. Thornton: Peccaries

Thornton: I had five of those. You couldn't keep a collar on 'em. I put a harness on 'em. I had 'em so they took their seats. One morning I was going to work—I wanted to put the leash on 'em, you know. Boy, they threw a fit. I tried to figure what was the matter with 'em . . . then I discovered the harness had made them sore under the front leg. Well, that was the finish of that. By the time they healed up the show was ready to open. They gave 'em to the



Water wagon of the Con T. Kennedy carnival in 1909, the year Barnes was there.

Dallas Zoo. I had those so they took their seat.

I didn't know nothing about peccaries then. Since I saw that Disney picture with the peccaries in it where the bobcat drops out of the tree on top of one of 'em. He took after that bobcat. Boy they are fast.

Reynolds: Was it common back at that time to use a lion or a tiger riding an elephant, or is that something that's fairly recent?

Thornton: Oh, I had a riding lion. I had two of 'em. That was in 1909. They rode a horse. Where I worked on the old fair grounds in Portland, I had a small octagon building. And I was there alone. All the animals didn't work. Al G. and his wife had all the working animals in vaudeville. I had two lions there—well, I had four. One male and one female, the female had cubs. That's the reason they left her in. And then I had three young lions. There was one horse named Kansas. The old man bought him in Kansas. The building I was in was too small to put up an arena and I had four sections of steel arena laying on its side. Kind of an octagon shape. I built an arena there just the height of the horses back. So I built some props and worked 'em on a collar and chain.

Well, at first I worked 'em loose. I got 'em so they rode around pretty good on the horse. When I first took 'em in there, I was trying to figure out how I was going to get the lions and the horse in there and shut the gate at the same time. I got the one lion in there. I got the female in there on a seat in the middle of the arena. Then I turned the horse in and while I was fastening the door the horse wandered over and was smelling the lion. This could only happen once in 50 years. I finally got them working . . . the male and the female, Sultan and Sultana their

names was. Then they got the idea they didn't want to work. They'd ride around and then jump over the arena outside. So I'd go out and bring 'em back in. Then I put a collar and chain on them. They'd ride around and jump out and I'd hang onto the chain and they'd hang there. After two or three days of that they wouldn't jump anymore. I got 'em so they rode around on the bridge across the pedestal and onto the horse on the other side. Then I used to put my head in the male's mouth. And then the male would stretch across two pedestals and I'd carry him around on my shoulders. I had a real nice act. At that time they were going to the Con T. Kennedy Carnival. That's C. W. Parker's son-in-law. It was the first year, 1908, with Parker. In 1909 I was with Con T. Kennedy. They loaded the animals in a box car with the lions at the front end. Of course, they didn't get no air. And the female—no, the male suffocated. I just worked the female then. She worked up until I left the show in 1923. After the male died, she got very nervous. I used to place a pedestal there for her to mount the horse. She didn't need no pedestal. She was so nervous she'd dash in onto that horse.

Borders: What year did you say he was on Con Kennedy?

Thornton: 1909. C. W. Parker was 1908. Parker turned it over to his son-in-law, Con T. Kennedy. Al G.'s outfit was a good show for a carnival. When I first went there I took two camels. I was working Fighting the Flames in White City, Chicago. Al G. came on and bought the two camels. Someone told him about me, being there the year before with the P. J. Mundy Animal Show. So he got me to take the camels on the show. When I first got there he had one elephant, Ruth. And the two camels, one horse, Kansas, and five ponies, a four pony drill, and one pony that did a January act, and a mule that worked in the January act. They had a dog act, and he had four Fox Terriers dressed up as ponies. He done an act with them. And they were good. They did a regular pony act. One day the tail end one, when they got through, you know, he shook himself and his tail came off. It made a hit. People laughed, so after that they fixed it so the tail would come off. It always got a laugh.

They talk about Chester Conklin



going to the movies from the Barnes show. It was a colored guy, Snowball they called him. They called him Snowball because he was real black. He used to ride a pig down the track. That's something to do you know? Ride a pig. He sat up there---all he had on was a pair of white rimmed glasses reading a paper. That hog would go down the track squealing, you know.

Mrs. Thornton: Of course, he had on his clothes. When he got to the end he'd stop and the rider would go over his head.

Reynolds: Do you remember when Barnes got the elephant Barney?

Thornton: Around 1912 or 1913. Around there somewhere. Barney and Vance come on together. They shipped 'em from Louis Ruhe in New York. They come in crates. I took 'em out of the crates and when I took Barney out he smacked me in the stomach and knocked me about 10 feet. He was tough.

Reynolds: Where were they delivered?

Thornton: In Venice. The Wells Fargo Express Company was quite close to the quarters. It was around 1912 or 1913, I forget which. Vance was named after Vance Hill of the Southern Pacific. Of course, Barney was named after Al G.

Reynolds: Did he stay as small as reported. Didn't he grow?

Thornton: Well, I don't know. In 1923 we left the show and after we left they sold him to someone down in Mexico. I didn't see him after that. He was still small.

Mrs. Thornton: They were all small.

Thornton: Vance later on got to be a big elephant.

Mrs. Thornton: Barney could have grown the same way. He was young when he was sold.

Thornton: Vance killed a guy on the Ringling show in 1938. It was the Barnes show with the Ringling features added. He went all of a sudden. He never showed any signs of being bad. They used to hook him up with Jewel, and pull cages. They were spotting a cage in the menagerie, hooked to Jewel, when he went bad. They guy was riding Jewel's head. He just reached



Elephants Vance and Barney in a Barnes parade around 1918.

up and got the guy and threw him and then made a bee-line after him, broke the harness, and got away from Jewel. The guy got up and ran but he caught him right outside the back door of the menagerie.

Mrs. Thornton: Oh, that was horrible. Honey, if you remember, Barney wasn't so mean.

Thornton: Oh, he was tough. But I mean they used him for the riding tiger and they worked him in the arena.

They used to hook Barney and Vance up to a cross-cut cage, pull 'em around in the spec, and they had Barney on the outside. One day they had a full house with people sitting on the ground. Barney made a dive after a guy and it was lucky because he had tusks about that long and the guy was in between the tusks. Well, after that they changed 'em and put Vance on the outside. That was a lucky break. Yeah, he was tough.

Borders: Tell us about the blow downs Barnes had.

Thornton: I don't know which blow down it was. There was several of them. They had one in Rainy River, Canada. It blowed down and blew the people off of the church right across the street from the lot. They brought in Canadian wood-choppers

Barnes blowdown in Big Timber, Montana on July 14, 1925.



and had them build quarter and side poles. It broke 'em all.

Mrs. Thornton: I don't believe that was the one. That was later. I've got a photo. I think its Helena. I sent it to my mother. I had written on the back "Blowdown, Helena, Montana 1925."

Thornton: The top was flopping around and everyone was outside. Harry Levy was standing in the middle

of the tent. I was underneath the arena wagon. Harry was hollering, "What'll I do. What'll I do?" I said, "Come on over here, Harry." And he got under the arena wagon with me. I knew they had the top tied to the wagon. And I knew it wasn't going to turn that arena wagon over.

They had one blowdown in Louisiana. That was one of those Gulf storms. They got word that night that the storm would hit about eleven o'clock that night. They hurried the shows through. The storm hit about ten o'clock. They had everything out except dropping the tent. They had pulled the wagons around the top and tied off to the wagons beside the stakes. That wind got under the top and took it up in the air and turned six or eight of those wagons over. One of 'em was the dog wagon, and Martha Florine's. She was working leopards. She always took care of the dogs. Rain--it was coming down in buckets. I was on my way to the train. Martha was already down at the train and she was on her way to the lot to see about the dogs. Of course, the dog wagon was turned over but she stayed there with them. Oh, it took till noon the next day to get the wagons turned right side up and get it loaded. There was so many blowdowns. I don't remember any one particularly.

Mrs. Thornton: Where was the town where the back end of the big top blew down--I think it was San Francisco.

Thornton: When the show was smaller they used to tie everything out to the guy lines. The had a leopard, goats, bears . . . used to tie 'em all around the show. They had a high wind one time and out in the back the goats tied to the stakes. Well, the stakes pulled and the top was going up and down. When it did the goats went up and down



with it. They'd go up and yell "haaaaaa." People on the back seats all left. I lost my best goat that way. I had a good buttin' goat. He looked just like the picture on the billboards of that Bock Beer ad. He looked just like that. It was a good butter. All you had to do was stoop over and he'd get you. I had him tied out between the menagerie and the big top. Well, three tigers got out. I was working the pig act. There was a monkey, a high diving monk. The monkey was tied on the ladder waiting for his act. I'm working the pigs and the monk run up and down that ladder and looking down the other end and hollering. I looked down to see what he was hollering about and I saw a tiger go under the seats. At the time, I thought it was just one. Austin King, the horse trainer, was standing on the track, I said, "Here, Austin, take this act. I'll go round up that tiger." He said, "Which one is next?" I said, "The spotted one." It happened that there were three spotted ones. It didn't make any difference. I went out and followed the tiger around under the seats and he went out the front door.

Skinny Dawson, the press agent, was in the front door. Well, when he saw the tiger coming he went up the center pole of the marquee. The tiger ran on out. Skinny came down the pole and another one came along. He went up again. I rounded these two up. It happened out to the right of the big top. There was a dirt road and a barbed wire fence on each side. They got in that road and were rolling in the dust. Sidney Rink, elephant trainer, a colored guy, he came along with his bull hook and I said, "Here Sid, you stand here just move your bull hook, just swing your bull hook and keep them there while I go get a cage. Then I discovered there was another one running around. So I got these two in the cage and I went looking for the other one. He was out in the back. He ran between the menagerie and the big top. As he went by he took a swipe at a goat and cut his throat. Just like that. That was the finish of that goat. We rounded him up and got him back in the cage. It was a funny thing, you



Louis Roth wild animal trainer with the Barnes show.

know, about this show. There was animals running around there all the time and nobody got hurt. Nobody got excited.

There was one time they all got excited. I did too. They had a lion, he was a big, black-maned lion, and he was tough. He ran Louie Roth out of the arena. A woman worked him. Women could go up there and pet him and do anything. Louie Roth could go into the arena and he would run him out. But, anyhow, one day he got out. The guys forgot to shut the door. He was walking toward the pad room, and Bert Dennis.

Mrs. Thornton: Just as he was

The front of the Barnes winter quarters in Venice, California.



coming out of the menagerie I came out the back door with the elephants and the ponies. I worked in the arena. The elephants carried the ponies down the track and I went out the back door. As I came out with Jewel and Buster, the pony. The lion was coming at me. Brutus, wasn't it? It was Brutus with a wonderful big black mane. I never was so scared in my life. Bert Dennis was coming with one of his long lunge ropes. He said, "Just keep walking. Walk right on." I walked just to the dressing room with that lion behind me. Bert was attracting his attention with his lunge rope. I got in the dressing room. I was so weak I couldn't sit down. Cheerful Gardner was up on top of the cages, He threw a chunk of wood at him. He hit him in the tail and he turned around and went back into the menagerie. He went under the cages. At that time they had the polar bears in the middle of the cages in the menagerie. I had a little, about a year old, black bear tied there. Brutus saw that bear. He made a dive after the bear and the rope in front of the other cages, He caught him right across the front of the chest and threw him upside down. That scared him, and he ran back under the cages. I stopped the animal acts. I tore the arena down and got around that lion. But first I got a canvas and put around him. Then I went in and got about four sections of the arena and put around him. But all you had to do was stick your nose there, soon as he saw it he'd make a dive at it. We finally got him back in his cage That was the only time I was ever scared when a animal got out.

Thornton: We had animals that would run around there all the time. One season the show closed with Louis Roth's lion act. Then they had the flank team run around the track--a ten horse flank team. When the lion act was over they tore the chute out for the flank team and here came two lions walking out. They walked up the track toward the front door. I think that Bert Dennis was there then. He hollered, "That's all right folks. Just sit still." The lions just stood there and looked at



them. Finally, I herded them back into the arena. They opened a section. They already had the net down. They opened a section and herded them back into the arena. When we went up town the people were saying what a swell show it was, with lions running all over the place.

The show was small then. Charley Cook, who finally got to be manager of the show, in 1923 or 1924, was boxing a kangaroo. Cook was a fill-in clown at that time. The kangaroo jumped out of the ring and took off down the track. Well, they just had a rope in front of the seats then. There was a big fat colored woman sitting in the front row and he choose her. He took after that big fat woman. All she done was get up and start laughing. The kangaroo had his arms around her neck. She hollered, "Man, I done got my four bits worth." They charged fifty cents admission then.

Reynolds: You remember the elephant Countess?

Thornton: No.

Mrs. Thornton: No.

Thornton: She was later on. The first elephant Al G. had was Ruth. He had her when I first went on the show in 1908. Then we got Jewel and Babe. He got those from Louis Ruhe in New York. They come on the show in Sheridan, Wyoming.

Reynolds: This is when he was on the carnival?

Thornton: Yes. That must have been. I forget whether that was 1908 or 1909. He was with a carnival. The animal show was on the main street in between some buildings. I had unloaded Babe and Jewel. At that time I was handling the three elephants and two camels. I took Babe and Jewel up and drove stakes and tied them up. I walked downtown for something. A big wind came up and I thought I'd better get back. So I ran back to the show and they had all pulled their stakes. They went out in the back where there was kind of a wagon. They stood with their head up against a wagon. I used to tie the camels onto Babe. I put a rope around their necks and tied the camels. They followed behind. I'd walk on the sidewalk and they walked down the road.

We got to Helena, Montana. There was a cold wind and it was snowing and I got them up on the



Mabel Stark in her early years with Al G. Barnes.

lot. Then the old man says, "I think you better take those elephants back to the cars." They were just small then. He didn't want them to take cold. So I took the camels down to the train. Then I came back and got the elephants. When I got about a block from the lot they'd turn around and go back. They done that about three times. Finally it dawned on me that they wanted the camels.

So I had to go back and get the camels and tie them on the back end and walk the elephants to the train.

Animals fall in love that way. They wouldn't go no place without those camels. Of course the regular elephant trainer got 'em out of that habit.

A typical Barnes horse riding lion act.



Reynolds: Who was the regular elephant trainer?

Thornton: The first elephant trainer was Tim Buckley in 1910. He was a good elephant man but he had one bad fault. He was afraid of dogs around the elephants. We always carried a pocket full of rocks. Buckley rode a horse. When he'd see a dog, he'd ride up and start rockin' the dog. In Mojave, the parade was heading back for the lot. We had a good parade in those days. That was around 1911. Buckley saw a dog and, of course he started off after the dog and started throwing rocks at it. The elephants started after him, and the camels started after the elephants. The other ring stock started after the camels and the first thing you know everything was running away. The whole parade ran away. Fortunately they all ran back to the lot except the side show band four-horse team. They ended up in a church yard. The elephants got tangled up in some clothes lines and they rounded those up downtown. I was riding a horse at the time. I jumped off my horse. I knew he was alright (wouldn't run) and I tried to catch the sacred ox. The rope went through my hands and burned them. I turned it loose and walked back. The next elephants were Barney and Vance.

Reynolds: Did Sidney Rink replace Buckley?

Thornton: Yes I think Sidney Rink took over for Tim Buckley. Sidney was there in 1914.

Reynolds: And then after him, Gardner?

Thornton: Yeah. And after Gardner was Red McKay. Then . . . there was somebody before that. Oh, was was his name.

Mrs. Thornton: Red McKay came after Cheerful didn't he?

Thornton: No, there was one before that. A big guy around 1913. Bill

somebody, he was a big guy. He took 'em after Sidney Rink. Yeah, there was some big guy. He took 'em from Sidney Rink. I don't know whether it was one or two years. Apparently wasn't there too long.

Reynolds: After Barney and Vance, what were the next elephants?

Thornton: I don't remember after Barney and Vance.

Reynolds: What about Mable and Pearl?

Thornton: Was Pearl the



one eyed elephant?

Reynolds: Yes.

Thornton: Those I don't remember. I was away from the show in 1916. I left it in San Francisco. I came back in the fall of 1917.

Reynolds: Do you recall how many lions Roth worked in those early years?

Thornton: Oh, I don't know exactly but he had 16 or 18 lions in the act at one time. Male and female lions. When he first came on I had that lion and tiger act. There were two lions and two tigers. Al G. gave 'em to his wife to work. She didn't know enough about it to keep 'em separated. They got to fighting so we finally took the lions out and put them into Louis act and added more to 'em and made a tiger act

Reynolds: That was when Mabel [Stark] came on?

Thornton: Yeah. That was about 1911 or 1912.

Reynolds: Did you use pumas at that time in an act?

Thornton: I had one puma that used to ride a pony. That was Barnes' first riding lion. He used to advertise it as a riding lion, but it was a puma riding a pony. When I first went on the show, he had a riding lion act then. I think it was four lions and a big black bear. The old man worked them. One trick he did then . . . he put the lion on a couple of pedestals in the front of the arena and stood on the lion's back. And the bear walked up the arena, and he gave it a piece of sugar. One day the bear got him by the hand and pulled him off of the lion and got after the old man. One of the lions took after the bear and saved the old man. That was a big bear, the biggest black bear I think I ever saw. I guess that was the only reason he had it, because it was so big. Anything out of the ordinary, you know, he'd buy it. He had a horse one time. You'd hear him talk about 21 hands high this horse was. He was the biggest I ever saw. Of course, he advertised him as from the Al G. Barnes Ranch in California.

Reynolds: What did he use it for, did he work it?

Thornton: No, just walked it around the track with a pony, the smallest pony. One time he had an ocelot. It didn't work either. He carried it around the track in his arms.

Reynolds: Did he ever work jaguars in a cat act?

Thornton: No, he never had any



The front of the Bostock wild animal show.

jaguars. Before I went with the Barnes show, on the P. J. Mundy Animal Show, a woman worked leopards and jaguars. She was a French woman. It was in Luna Park, Coney Island. She worked them with a long lunge whip, like a horse whip. She wore long train dresses. The leopards and jaguars were fast movers. The back of the arena was wood. When we first opened there we brought on a fellow from Europe--an artist to paint the background. Well, he painted the amphitheater in Rome where they tied the Christians to the stakes and turned the lions in on 'em. He painted the lions so real that when we turned the real lions in there they looked like a couple of dogs. He had to paint the lions out. They left the Christians there but painted the lions out.

Bostock had an animal show out on Surf Avenue [on Coney Island]. The Ferrari brothers had an animal show. They were all trying to outdo one another. Bostock went in behind where they brought the lions to the tunnel to the arena. He had a guy scratch him all up. Then they turned the lions loose in the arena. Then they brought Bostock out. Of course, the press wanted to look Bostock over. He got a doctor to put in some deeper scratches. So P. J. Mundy, he'd been telling what a good trainer he was to the press, so he had a leopard on a collar and chain. He clipped its claws and cut its long teeth. He was going to show the press how good he was as a trainer. Then, of course, the leopard ran up the arena and he pulled it down. When it came down the claws came down his face. He only had one eye. When they cut the claws they left them ragged and they sure messed up his face.

Bostock had some animals shipped in and I can't say they did it deliberately but one of them got loose

on the dock. I always did think Bostock turned it loose deliberately.

Reynolds: The Ferrari Shows . . . you never hear anything about them. Joe and Francis Ferrari, they were two brothers that had a carnival?

Thornton: Jack Bonavita was Bostock's big animal trainer. He had about 40 lions. Of course, all they done was bring them into the arena. They brought them into the arena and they took seats. It was a pyramid. He knelt down

in front of them and then they ran 'em out. By the time they got them on the seats and got them out again it was an act. He ended up here in Selig Park in Los Angeles. A polar bear tore Bonavita's arm off. He married some rich woman from New York. It didn't last long.

I had a fellow by the name of John Dugaak [?] with the Barnes show. He was a good animal trainer. In Venice, they had two spotted hyenas and two striped hyenas. They wanted to change them over from one side of the arena to the other side of the arena. So John run 'em into the arena and was going to run them out the other side. He went into the arena and those hyenas took after him. Boy! all he had was a broom and a club. They took them both away. One would run up and grab him and he'd grab it and throw it and another one would come in. finally, a fellow . . . Clarence somebody, got him out of there. He was in the hospital quite a while.

When he got out of the hospital he said he was through with animal training. He had a brother up in San Francisco who was an electrical contractor. He went up to work for his brother and got electrocuted. Just goes to show you that when the time comes, that's it.

Reynolds: One time the Barnes show advertised an okapi. I don't imagine they had one, but did they have some other animal they used for it?

Thornton: Yeah. He bred a zebra to a pony. It looked like more of a pony. But it had striped legs. Cheerful Gardner killed it. He tied it down . . . it was a stud . . . to castrate it and killed it. But he advertised it as an okapi. Of course at that time no one knew what an okapi was, let alone seen one.

Borders: Did they ever have a giraffe?

Thornton: Not while I was there. They had 'em after I left the show



(1938). They had a yak and a buffalo . . . that is a bison . . . and there was something else that worked with it. I forget now what it was. This was way back. A colored guy that worked the llamas act. It was around 1912 or 1913.

Reynolds: Did you ever see a yak worked any other place?

Thornton: No.

Reynolds: Did Barnes ever have any Negro clowns?

Thornton: Well, they did; they filled in. Like Snowball, he rode the pig. I forget what else they did around the show. He didn't wear white-face. He took care of animals. They had another colored guy . . . Eddie something his name was. He was tall and light colored. He worked the llamas dressed as an Indian. Not an Indian--a South American. Then he had Sidney Rink and Andy. Andy something. Sidney Rink and Andy were the two best bucking mule riders I ever saw. They were real. One mule they had . . . it was black and undershot. They wore a horse shoe nail with the point down. They'd put their hand on that mule's back and mule would kick a mile a minute. They wore frock-tail coats and the mule would kick their frock-tail coats up. Just at the right time they would turn a somersault and then run. And the mule would run after them. They would stop, you know, just outside the ring and the mule would grab them by the pants. It was the best I ever saw. They never did get on the mule. All they had to do was put their hand on his rump, you know, and the mule would just stand there and kick.

Reynolds: Did you know a Happy Harrison?

Thornton: This was around 1908 or 1909 when the old man first bought that mule for a bucking mule. Happy Harrison was a glass eater in the side show. His wife later had ponies and dogs in vaudeville. In the fall of 1909 Happy Harrison borrowed the mule from the old man to go in vaudeville. When he came back in the spring he had another mule just like him. He brought him out to winter quarters to turn him in. The old man says, "Happy, come here. Where's my mule?" Happy said, "There he is." The old man said, "The mule I gave you was a gelding. This is a mare." Happy had tried to pull a fast one on the old man. He was a glass eater,

you know, swallowed nails and all that kind of stuff.

One day they opened him up and took out a cup full of nails and glass. After he died his wife went in vaudeville with a pony act and dogs on a revolving table. She showed around Los Angeles many times.

The side show manager at that time . . . I forget his name . . . opened a show store in Spokane. The old man had a couple of macaws and he borrowed those to put in his store. A red macaw and a blue macaw. The red macaw would say, "Hello, Blue. Hello, Blue." The blue one would say, "Go to hell, Red. Go to hell, Red." He went down to open his store one morning and Red was deadlier than a door nail on the bottom of his cage. Blue was sitting up there saying, "Go to hell, Red. Go to hell, Red."

The old man had a parrot that could talk. They never used it in the show. Around 1908 there was a fellow named Carl something. He took care of him. Carl would come down to the quarters and take the cover of the cage the same way every morning. Carl would say, "Good morning, Raymond. Raymond would say, "Good morning, good morning." Carl would say, "Well, are you going to sing for me?" Raymond would laugh. Carl would say, "Going to get out?" The bird would say, "Raymond, go fly, Raymond go fly." Carl would say, "You so-and-so, if you are going to fly, I won't take you out." Then the bird would laugh and Carl would take him out and put him on his shoulder. Carl would say, "Go ahead and sing." I forget the name of the song now, but that bird would sing it just as plain. He'd sit on his shoulder and sing with his head going up and down. That was the routine every

Elephant man Sidney Rink riding a horse in a Barnes parade.



morning. I don't know what happened to Carl. I never did hear of him after the old man went on the road.

They had a lion act. This was in the fall of 1909. They had a little guy named Eddie Kelly, that worked with the lions. Pantages wanted a lion act. He wanted a woman working it. That was when the old man wintered in Spokane. So, they dressed Eddie Kelly up as a woman. Eddie always had a big chew of tobacco in his mouth. The old man sent me along with him. I'd set the act and look Eddie over before he went into the arena and make him take his chew out. We showed Frisco, Seattle, and went to Vancouver from Seattle. Then Harley Tyler came on. He was the fixer for the show at that time. He says, "You go back to quarters and I'll take care of Eddie." I went back to quarters. That was when the old man introduced me to the bears. He'd been talking about bears before that. He told me there were some bears for sale in Chicago. Tibet and Russian brown bears. He wanted to know if they were any good or not. I said, "Yeah, they're supposed to be good workers." So he sent and got 'em.

There was a fellow, a big German, on there . . . an animal trainer, I forget his name. Eventually he was down in Mexico with a Mexican show. He was also with the Wallace show.

When I went back to Spokane the old man took me out to quarters to show me the bears. There were two Tibet bears and two Russian brown bears. The two Russian bears didn't have a hair on 'em except on top of their heads. They'd been in a hot place somewhere and shed all their hair off. He says, "Do you suppose you can do anything with them." I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll try." I said, "what become of so-and-so?" The big German trainer. He said, "Well, the bears run him off."

I started in on 'em. I guess I broke fifty kitchen chairs on 'em before I could get close to 'em. Boy, they'd come charging. They'd knock all the legs out from under the chairs. I finally got so I could handle 'em. I kept 'em on a long chain about 16 or 18 ft. long. Who ever had a hold of the chain was all right. But anybody else they'd run 'em. There was two more that used to be tied around the tent. I finally hired a big guy



working on props. I got him to help me with the bears. That guy used to take one in each hand and take 'em down swimming. With me they used to take off just like I had a cow by the tail.

Reynolds: Who did you say worked the polar bear act?

Thornton: That was after I left. He didn't have the act in the early days.

Mrs. Thornton asked about somebody.

Thornton: Yeah, it was his wife that used to work a tough lion. She could go in there with the lion act and he'd rub up along her, she fed him, he'd lie down and roll over. A man would go in there and he'd be after him. He had no use for a man. This was Brutus. Most usually with animals it's just the opposite. Women or children . . . that was one thing I was always scared of . . . women or children around wild animals. When the show was small they had the menagerie in the back of the big top. It wasn't canvassed off. Instead of seats in the back they had the cages. One day I walked in there . . . we had a rope in front of 'em . . . there was an old fellow under the rope petting the animals. I went in there and I said, "Say Mr., you shouldn't be in here. You're liable to get hurt. You'd be surprised how far those animals can reach through those bars." He came outside the rope, and I said, "In fact, you shouldn't be in here at all, the show is not open." He gave me his card. He said, "You take this downtown to the store and get anything you want." After he went out I took a look at it. Jimmy Durkin, Wholesale and Retail Liquors. So, I go downtown and went in. It was a big place. On one side was wholesale, on the other side was a kind of restaurant and saloon. So I said to the fellow "is that any good." He said, "Best in the world. What do you want." I forget now what kind it was. He gave me a fifth, whatever it was, I forget. I went outside and I took a look at the front. It was two stores in one. Up on the second store was a big sign, the length of the two stores which said, A Minister of the Gospel Jimmy Durkin is a man of His Word. The letters about two feet high.

Reynolds: Do you remember the elephant that Cheerful did the head carry with?

Thornton: Yeah. That was Jewel. That was one thing--those elephants--they done everything. They



Albert Stonehouse, brother of Al G., with one of his seals.

played football; they played bowling; they done laundry and the barber shop; and the of course, the head carry. Anything an elephant ever did they did it. In later years, they came up with that one-foot stand and all that kind of stuff. They didn't do that.

Around 1910, 1909 or 1910, there was a colored guy named Eph Thompson from the states went to Europe with an elephant act. He tried to train an elephant to turn somersault. He put 'em on a spring board and turned 'em over. He finally broke one of them's neck and that was it.

Reynolds: When did Barnes first have a lion or tiger riding an elephant?

Thornton: I tried to train a tiger to ride an elephant, but I never got the tiger on the elephant. I think it was around the Mugivan shows that tigers first rode elephants.

Mrs. Thornton: Didn't Cap Ricardo have a tiger riding Barney?

Thornton: There was one time around 1918 they had a hoof and mouth disease up around North Dakota. The old man had to lay off two or three days. He told Cap Ricardo and I, "Now if you want to go ahead and do some training your salary will go on just the same." So he suggested we break a tiger to ride the elephant. We covered the elephant, Babe, with canvas and got a saddle on her covered with canvas. I said, "We'll get her used to the lion first." (The lion that rode the horse.) Then try with the tiger." We ran the elephant around the arena for a couple of days and on the third day brought the lion in. Cap was working the elephant and I was working the lion. Cap wanted to tell me something and he

let the elephant go. I said, "You better hold on to that elephant." But no, he had to turned her loose and come over and tell me something. He turned her loose and she put her head out the end of the arena and went through. The lion was sitting on the pedestal in the middle of the arena. We both took after the elephant. I got as far as the front door and happened to think of the lion. So I went back and she was still sitting there looking around. I went over and opened the door and she went out. That's as far as the tiger and the elephant ever got.

That was one thing about Al G. He was always trying something new. The hardest thing I found about training animals was trying to figure something to work them to. I'd been years breaking this animal for that, and this animal for that, you finally run out of ideas. I found at the finish that I couldn't think of anything else. You see animals today doing tricks that have been done years ago. I saw a an act in *Billboard*. A Russian advertising a lion riding a horse. They thought it was new. Pinto Colvig a musician on the Barnes show when I had the riding lion about 1909. He wrote and told them that there was nothing new about that. Bob Thornton had one in 1909.

We used to have what we called the Riding Four. That was a leopard, bear, dog and monkey riding zebras. The hardest thing to break to ride the zebra was the bear. It took a smell of that bear and they were ready to take off. The leopard wasn't too hard. The bears were the toughest. The smell about that bear they didn't like. We worked that quite a while.

We once had an eight zebra act. Three studs in there. One in the lead, one in the middle and one on the tail end. So as to keep 'em separated. But they'd get together and they'd put up quite a fight. The one on the tail end, I had to watch him, they'd be going around the ring and he'd take a side kick at me. There's another hard thing to keep in the ring. You had to handle those with kid gloves to keep 'em in.

Reynolds: Did they work any wolves on the Barnes show?

Thornton: No. We had some wolves and coyotes, but they smell too high. The odor smelled really awful, those wolves, coyotes, bobcats. We received two bobcats one time. That was when I was in Portland. They came separ-



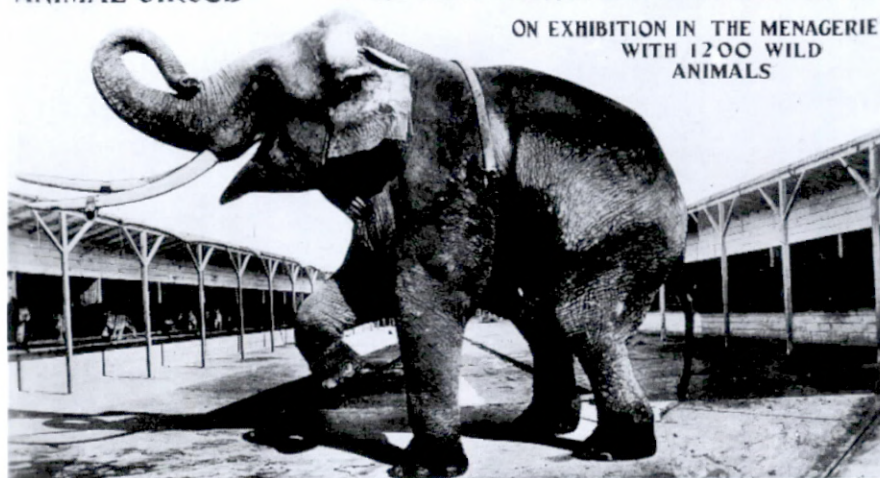
AL. G. BARNES  
BIG 4 RING WILD  
ANIMAL CIRCUS

"TUSKO"

THE LARGEST ELEPHANT  
IN THE WORLD

A FOOT TALLER THAN 'JUMBO' A TON AND A HALF HEAVIER

ON EXHIBITION IN THE MENAGERIE  
WITH 1200 WILD  
ANIMALS



ate. Well, they must have been two males. When I put them together all I saw was a bunch of fur going around. They finally separated and I got one in each corner. They never would come out of the corner. I used to shove their food into 'em. and shove their water into 'em. They would eat and drink right there and never move.

There was a little building I had in Portland. I had a lion, one sea lion, and a male and female lion with cubs, and the two lions that I had trained to ride the horse. Outside I had some goats, wolves, coyotes and bob cats. I kept them outside and built a pen for them. I had a cross cut cage with some Rhees monks in it. One of them had one eye. I had a big lion about a year old . . . between nine months and a year old. I slept in the building. This young lion I kept chained to the foot of my bed. At night it would get up on the foot of the bed and sleep on my feet. Which was all right. It kept me warm. One night I pulled the covers up. He pulled 'em down. I pulled 'em up. He bit me in the foot. After that I kept him chained. The routine every morning was cleaning up. The only way to clean the monkey cage out was to open the back door. Well, I tried to fill it with my body and clean it out at the same time. There were three or four monkeys in there. This one-eyed one would get out every morning. He'd duck past. I had two dogs, a fox terrier and bulldog and this young lion. I'd get up on top of the cages and run him off of there. Then if he went under the cages the dogs would run him out. He'd run around the room until he'd go by the lion and

The mighty Tusko in the Venice winter quarters.

the lion would reach out and put his foot on him. The monk would just look up and wait for me to come down and get him.

Those two dogs and that lion, I used to open the door and let them out. I never gave it a thought, you know, that there might be a hole in the fence and they would get out and go down the street . . . but they'd be gone for hours. When they got tired they'd come back. Finally I went out one morning and the lion tried to get in with the goat. So finally I had to chain him up. Things like that, you know, you never think of today. Maybe I didn't know any different but I worked 'em.

In Spokane, where I was training the bears . . . the other animals were over underneath the dance floor. It was kind of damp and the guy that was taking care of 'em never took care of 'em. They got sore feet and they got off their feed. The two lions, the monkey and the baby leopard. The old man asked me if I'd take 'em. So he brought 'em over. I had a stove in this big room that used to be an old road house. Spokane extended the city limits out there beyond it so they could close it up. That was where we wintered. The monk, I gave him a teaspoon of whiskey every day and he got tight on it. I had a kitchen chair sitting by the stove. He tried to jump up on that chair, he'd make it that far. I'd pick him up and put him on the chair and give him a lump of sugar. He'd sit there all right with sugar running down his cheeks.

The two lions and the leopard were off their feed. So I would get ground

meat and milk for them and mix it up and kept them off their water but they'd drink the milk and get the meat. Well, they finally got all right. It left the one lion with a weak back. He had a hump in his back. I called him "Humpy." The baby leopard . . . after he started to get well . . . I'd let him loose and he'd run around the room. He and the monkey had a good time. I had the cage built high off the floor and that monk would jump on the leopards back and ride all around underneath the cages.

They were sick together and they got well together. That's the thing about handling animals . . . you put two different animals together and you've got to be careful. Like down at the zoo. I see where a polar bear killed two others they put in there. If they'd had been caged so they couldn't get together before they got acquainted it would have been better. Once you get 'em acquainted and you could do most anything. That's the way you get lions and tigers together.

I put two cages together so that the bars were between them. They'd fight between the bars but they couldn't get at one another. Then after awhile they got so they didn't mind it. They'd lay there and eat alone side one another. Then I finally opened the cage and let one in with the other. I got 'em acquainted that way.

If you want to make an act like Clyde Beatty's for instance, where the lions and tigers fight, you just bring 'em in green. But you're taking an awful chance. They get to fighting, they're liable to get at you too. Clyde worked for me on the Robinson show. He was a cage hand. Then he worked with Pete Taylor who showed him how to work animals.

Mrs. Thornton: That was Chubby Guilfoyle that broke Clyde in first.

Thornton: That's right. They were on the Gollmar show. He had a mixed group act on the Robinson show. Pete had a nervous breakdown. He was ready to go into the arena, stepped in the safety cage and fell apart. That was when Clyde went in and took his place. Taylor later worked horses for Graham brothers, the automobile manufacturers. They had a riding stable or something and they put him in business.

Reynolds: Was Major a well-trained elephant on the Robinson show?

Thornton: Yeah, he was all right. Cheerful [Gardner] had him. Those male elephants all get bad when they



get a little age on 'em. When they get what they call musth. I used to watch Cheerful with Tusko. The vent in the head--they'd get that running you know. They'd keep it open and keep it clean. They seemed to handle better. Highpockets [C. H. Baudendistel] used to drink quite a lot . . . he couldn't handle Tusko. He'd be around him and Tusko would smack him over. I asked Cheerful one day, "What's the matter with him and Highpockets." He said, "Well, I guess he don't like Highpockets' smell."

Reynolds: Tell me about the elephant trainer at end of the season of Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1924?

Thornton: Well I don't know. When the John Robinson show went to West Baden, a fellow named Bert Noyes had the elephants. No, Red McKay had 'em, and then Bert Noyes. I don't know what happened . . . let's see, the first year, 1924, Dan Odom had the show and I don't remember whether he finished that year or not. He went over to the Hagenbeck show.

Borders: How long was Louie [Roth] on the Barnes show?

Thornton: Oh, quite a few years. He came on in 1910. I can't remember when he left there. He left and came back. Clyde Beatty was over there one season. He didn't stay long. I forget now what happened. Mark Smith went on the show [Barnes] after I left there. In 1924. Wasn't that when they got their horses all burned up? He bought all the new horses. Mark went on there and helped Austin King train them.

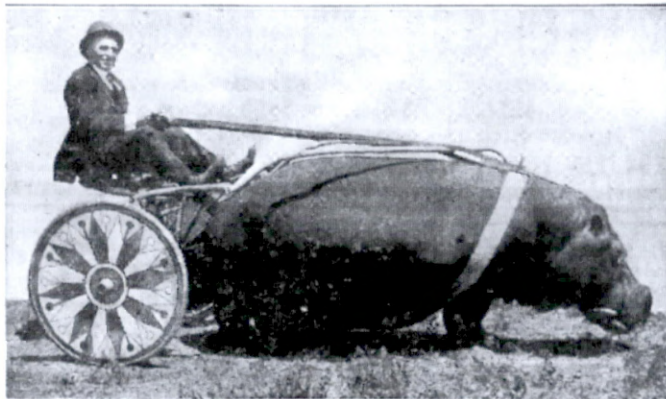
Reynolds: How big was the Barnes show, 25 or 30 cars?

Thornton: It was up to a 30-car show. But, I forget when. In 1918 when they had the flu, they closed down in Beaumont, Texas. That was far as they could go. We kept going as long as they would let us. But they got down in Beaumont and they were sprinkling the streets with disinfectant. They wouldn't allow people to congregate. We couldn't get no license to open there. Barnes said we might as well go back to California. Of course, in those days he had those wooden cars, you know, wooden flats. Every junction we would come to they'd bad order [reject] all the cars.

I forget who the fixer was, Al

Sands, I believe. He'd go along and do a lot of fixing you know, and they'd wipe it all off and make the next one [town]. Then they stop at the next and they'd check all the cars. At that time the depots were filled with cars, coming and going, empty ones and full ones. The only one on the show that got the flu was Bobby Fountain, the side show manager. The show got to Los Angeles, and they ordered everybody off the train. They went into Venice and they were waiting there to quarantine them.

Bobby was a swell guy--yeah, he was all right. He had a brother that worked in Culver City at a hotel.



Al G. Barnes and his hippo Lotus.

Yeah, he was the only one that got the flu at that time. In Venice there was a saloon back on the Speedway, called the Hole in the Wall. I went in there to get a drink and Col. Fred Cummins was sitting there. He said, "How are you feeling?" I said, "Not so hot. I feel sort of droopy." He said, "Well, I guess you are getting the flu." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. Get yourself a bottle of whiskey and a bag of onions. Eat the onions and drink the whiskey and tomorrow you'll be okay."

By gum, I did. I bet I ate a half a dozen onions I drank that pint of whiskey. Next morning I didn't know anything. But, I never had the flu.

Cummins sued the old man, you know. He went on the show in the concert. That was around 1915. He had a black horse he used to ride. The horse was trained to rear and it done a few little tricks. At that time I had an idea to take the pigeons in vaudeville. We leased his horse for \$25 dollars a week. I went to Alameda and I broke the pigeons . . . all white pigeons . . . with the black horse. We were going to call it a "Study in Black and White." Bess Harvey was doing the singing. I

opened up with a few tricks. And then she sang. While she was singing the verse I took the trappings off the horse and put the saddle on. Then she'd come out and get on the horse and ride in. While she was singing the verse I high-tailed it for the galleries and threw the birds. We were getting \$300 a week for that. When Cummins heard what we were getting for the act he raised the ante. So, I told Alec Pantages and he said, "Oh, to hell with him. Let the gal sit on a bench and sing. Give him the horse." But the gal didn't sit on the bench. We went up to Fresno and I bought a white horse. The only one I could get a hold of was from Mrs.

Zantz [?], up in Zantz park. A good looking horse. But I had to break all dark pigeons then. The white pigeons on the white horse didn't look so hot. So I had to break all different pigeons. But that lasted about three weeks. The gal went haywire. So I went back with the Barnes show.

Reynolds: Was Lotus a young animal at the time she arrived?

Thornton: Well, I wouldn't say she was young. I imagine she was half grown. She got big afterwards. She was an exceptional animal. They had one on the Robinson show who would take off.

Reynolds: Did you know Big Otto [Breitkreutz]?

Thornton: I went to work for Big Otto in Chicago in Riverview Park. I went over there and he put me to work. He wanted a pig act. So I went and got the pigs. The first week I went up to get my salary and he said "You know we have a holdback." So I said, "O.K." I said, "I'd like to draw some." So he gave me two dollars. The next week I went up for my salary and he said, "Salary? Did you spend that two bucks already." That was as far as I went with Big Otto.

Reynolds: What kind of a show did he have. Was it a circus?

Thornton: He didn't have a circus--he had an animal show. This gal in Los Angeles that worked leopards, Olga [Celeste], worked for him. When I was over there in Chicago he had a colored guy who used to work the untamable lion. He worked it in the arena. The guy would go in there and run the lion around the arena shooting. Big Otto would be outside shooting. There was some guy around there, he wasn't as tall as Big Otto but he was bigger around. The





seats was just blues. This guy was working the untamable lion one day and the damned lion got out. This big guy was sitting in the blues, he fell through 'em. After we got the lion back in the arena we tried to figure out how that fat guy got through those blues.

Afterward when I was with the Barnes show in Culver City Captain Ricardo and I were going to break a lion to ride a horse. We had a little trouble getting the lion to jump from the pedestal to the horse. I had it a little too far away. But I was going to make him do it anyhow. Big Otto come over--he was out there visiting. He called me over and said, "Don't you think if you pulled the pedestal over a little closer you might make it?" I said, "Yes." Well, I went over and pulled the pedestal over and satisfied him. Of course, the lion jumped over on the horse and Big Otto said, "Bob's a student of mine."

Last time I heard of Otto before he died he had a monkey and baby in a walk-through. "Smallest mother and baby in the world!"

Times have changed now. When I first started in the business with the Barnes show they had the uptown ticket sales in the wagon. Spotted it on the main corner. They also had walk through shows, the sea lions, in a tank on a flat bed wagon to walk around right up on the main street. They paid a nickel or a dime.

Borders: Did they ever use Tusko in a parade?

Thornton: No. Al G. did have a nice parade. He had the cages all open and a woman in with the animals. One time Pearl Lingo was riding in the back of the leopard cage. They had one big leopard. You could lay on top of him and he wouldn't bother you. There were six mules pulling the cage. Skinny Dawson, press agent, he was back with the show. His father was the carpenter on the show. Going back to the lot there

The Al G. Barnes Circus in Wallace, Idaho on June 4, 1915.

was a sand spot to pull through. You had to go through there in a hurry to avoid getting stuck. Over on the right was a tree stump. Well, they were short of drivers and I put Skinny Dawson up there driving these six mules. When they were coming back and about to hit that soft spot, I told him, "I'm going to run these mules. Just hang on, and let 'em run." He didn't steer 'em right and they hit the tree stump. He landed up leading the mules. Broke his little finger. Pearl Lingo who was sitting in the back of the cage, hit the bars. She came out cussing and said, "Alright, Skinny, go back to the lot and bring your father out here."

Borders: What were your later circus activities?

Thornton: I worked for Jimmy Wood. In 1937 Wood didn't have a show. That year he borrowed a ferris wheel from that woman, wasn't it?

Mrs. Thornton: No, that was 1938. He was doing little shows. He was showing in school yards for the P.T. A.

Thornton: He had rides that year didn't he?

Mrs. Thornton: He didn't have anything to do with rides until 1947. He took out the Yankee-Patterson in 1945. He didn't do well with it. He was with the Martin Arthur show the year before. After the Yankee-Patterson closed in 1947 he had rides in 1948. In 1946 he had the 101 Ranch show out. We were with him before 1941 and then Bob took sick. We were with him again when he took the Ranch out.

Thornton: He took the 101 Ranch show out. I had a mule act on there. It was a nice act. That tail end mule [referring to a photo] used to run out of the ring. I had a clown sitting out here. He had a bottle and was supposed to be tight. The mule would go over there, and he'd give the mule

the bottle. And the mule would drink out of the bottle. I'd holler at him and he'd dash back in. I broke the mule to hit me from behind. He wasn't satisfied with hitting me. He used to bite me. I used to keep my jacket sewed up where he'd bite me. He didn't bite hard, just enough to tear the clothes. He told me he owned the mules. But he didn't own them at all. They belonged to Luke Anderson. Luke and his mother had the concessions on there.

These mules were originally owned by Sidney Rink. But they had been kicked around. Rink worked for Luke's father Bud. They were on the Arthur show, and they were on some other show before that. Jorgen Christiansen tried to work 'em on the Arthur show. They always ran out of the ring on him. Hanneford tried to work them on some other show. Russell Bros. had 'em. You know, mules . . . you can't handle them like a horse. You gotta kind of pamper 'em, cause they'll leave you. The mule act, the first time I saw it, it was a twenty-mule act in Coney Island in Luna Park. That guy could work those twenty mules anywhere. He didn't need a ring. He'd turn 'em out to pasture and all he had to do was call 'em. One at a time, and then he went through his routine. He went from the train to the wherever he was showing, those mules lined up two abreast with a guy riding a white mare ahead, and he rode behind on another horse. Those mules went down the road as if they didn't have anything on 'em. All he had to do was talk to them.

I got those mules so that all I had to do was talk to them and they acted pretty good. Only twice I think did they run out of the ring on me. Luke sold 'em to some show that was around here at that time. It was just a little show. Bailey Bros.

I had an offer for 'em to go into vaudeville. I thought Jimmy Wood owned 'em. The guy offered me \$350 a week for 'em. I told him to go talk to Jimmy. Of course Jimmy didn't own 'em.

Reynolds: Do you know anything about Barnes' children?

Thornton: I don't know what became of them. He had the three children alright. One of 'em, he kind of insinuated that it wasn't his. I think he thought that one of them belonged to Rex de Roselli. I don't know how true it was.

Jerry Mugivan said, "If Al G. Barnes knew as much about women as he does about show business he'd have the world by the tail."



Research into the history of the circus has resulted in the determination of the origin of most American circus parade wagons in existence today. One vehicle that has baffled students of the subject for over four decades is the elaborately decorated cage wagon at Circus World Museum currently identified with the number 85. A recent photographic discovery has finally enabled the mystery surrounding its initial construction to be solved. In addition to documenting the specific history of the cage, this monograph will also interpret the significance embodied in the continued existence of the vehicle.

As early as 1935 an elaborately decorated cage wagon began to appear as a prop in Hollywood films. The first documented use of it was in MGM's *O'Shaughnessy's Boy*, followed by the 1936 *Charlie Chan at the Circus* and a number of other productions. Historians were readily able to identify it in photographs taken of storage lots in California where properties leased to film studios were parked. By 1947 it came into the possession of circus operator Jimmy Wood (1898?-1972), who had established a quarters at 4112 Del Rey Avenue in Venice, California. On occasion Wood would pull one of the old circus wagons over to his showgrounds for atmosphere. The cage and several other wagons were in such tough shape that Wood turned them over to his friend Jimmy Condon, a scrap yard operator, in late 1951. Almost simultaneously, the Chamber of Commerce of Venice acquired the cage, along with four other circus wagons with an Al G. Barnes Circus heritage, from Wood and Condon and placed them on exhibition at a Pacific Electric Company lot at Mildred Avenue and Trolley Way. The site was frequently used as an illegal dump and the wagons were intended to dress up the site.<sup>1</sup>

With plans made for a Mickey Mouse Circus at Disneyland, the Walt Disney Studios acquired the five wagons in Venice in 1955 along with others stored in the Los Angeles area. While in

## SOLVING AMERICA'S GREATEST WAGON MYSTERY THE CARL HAGENBECK CAGE

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

Disney possession the cage was reconstructed, the organic materials being replaced by new lumber and the metal work salvaged and reused. The largely replica vehicle figured in the 1959 film *The Big Circus* and the 1961 Disney film version of James Otis' fictional *Toby Tyler*. After much negotiation, the bulk of the "Disneyized" circus wagons were donated to Circus World Museum in 1962. There the cage was identified by the number 85 and the vernacular name "picture frame cage." The title grew out of its somewhat unusual side configuration.

Pioneering historians' identifications of the wagon generally attributed it to the Al G. Barnes Circus. After all, other former Barnes wagons were found in the same vehicle rental collections. That show was known for its wide ranging wagon pedigrees, including wagons which had previously been owned by Adam Forepaugh, Barton & Bailey, Forepaugh-Sells, Gollmar Bros., Great Wallace, James Patterson, John Robinson, Norris & Rowe, Ringling

This 1906 photograph taken in Baltimore, Maryland, confirms that the cage was part of the Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows in 1906. Pfening Archives.



Bros., Sells Bros. and Sells-Floto. There were also new Barnes wagons from the Moeller brothers, six wagons constructed by Barnes' crew using carvings from the Bode Wagon Company, in addition to several recyclings of older wagons as Barnes decided to enhance his procession with "new" features. Skyboards went from a

steam calliope to a cage, carvings from a tableau cage and the "electric" bandwagon to air calliopes, and so on, all detail changes which complicated understanding the origins of Barnes wagons. That there were no photographs of the subject cage on Barnes was not particularly troublesome, as there was a dearth of good photographs of that circus and "new finds" were almost always revelations.

The initial statement of the cage's origins was given in a list of extant wagons published in the April 1950 issue of *Bandwagon* in which Joseph T. Bradbury described the subject item as "Cage, beautifully carved, origin unknown, probably unknown, probably Al G. Barnes." In a follow up piece in the November-December 1953 *White Tops*, Bradbury further identified the cage as "Al G. Barnes Cage-Beautiful highly carved cage of unknown origin, used by Al G. Barnes from about 1920 through 1928 season." The late Richard E. Conover was uncertain of the wagon's origins and even the legendary Col. Bill Woodcock, the doyenne of wagon historians, could not shed any light on the beginnings of the wagon. That was the way the story remained for the next 22 years.

The first revelation in the history of the cage came with the release of a photograph and remembrances from the son of circus man Frank A. Robbins (1854-1920).<sup>2</sup> Milt Robbins recalled that his father bought the wagon at the auction of the Dan Robinson's Famous Shows. The R-F-S monogram on the wagon sides was retained and served, in a different order, to represent the Frank Robbins Shows name of the new owner. The Robbins photograph



was particularly significant for showing the cage without the elaborate decorative carvings for which it was famous. Though the cage sideboards and fastening hardware were intact, the wagon served as a tableau on Robbins. It carried a band on the roof in parade and trunks internally between engagements.<sup>3</sup> By the reported 1913 date of the Milt Robbins photograph the elaborate scenic paintings recalled by him were gone. A 48 star flag is visible in the picture, placing the date of the print after February 1912 when Arizona joined the Union. The only adornment was simple molding which framed the irregular openings on the sides. It was now clear that the elaborate carvings had been added at a later date. Another photograph has recently been discovered which shows the cage, presumably configured as a tableau but without a band on top, in the 1913 Robbins parade, at which time it bore the number 32.<sup>4</sup>

It was becoming more likely that the wagon was never associated with the Barnes circus, especially as additional illustrations of 1920s Barnes wagons became available, none of which showed the cage. The Barnes attribution appeared to be grounded solely in the wagon's presence among ex-Barnes assets in the California location. That provenance was finally rationalized away with Milt Robbins' recollection that the Robbins circus had been foreclosed by the Erie Lithographing and Printing Company for poster bills and subsequently sold to a Los Angeles film studio. The Robbins show last toured in 1915, the entire 25 car property being offered for sale late the next year.<sup>5</sup> Sometime thereafter all or part of the show was taken to California. Surprisingly, this cage appears to be the only identifiable Robbins vehicle to have survived and received the attention of historians.

The first chapter in the history of the cage can now be ascertained with the discovery of a photograph showing it in the April 18, 1906 parade of the Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows. Taken in Baltimore, Maryland, the view was printed in the June 15, 1958 *Baltimore Sunday Sun*. The location of the photograph is given as East Baltimore Street. Though identified as "about 1907," between the years 1905 and 1912 the only season a Hagenbeck-titled



The similarities between this Carl Hagenbeck wagon and the subject cage are readily evident in this 1906 Baker-Lockwood photograph. It clearly depicts the high quality Bode construction and fine paint work which was applied to all of the cages. Circus World Museum collection.

show played Baltimore was 1906, setting the date. In looking at this photograph, the immediate reaction is to question why it took twenty years after the discovery of the Robbins print and this photograph to associate the wagon with the Hagenbeck operation. Clearly it has the same body style as many other well-known Hagenbeck cages. There were at least half a dozen cages with paneled, "picture frame" like sides and openings surrounded by simple wood moldings. Each also had outside sunburst wheels and flush or concealed clean-out doors, a pair of narrow boards hinged at the top running most of the length of each side at the deck level. When raised, the resulting slots enabled cage boys to readily remove animal feces from the wagon's floor with metal scrapers and facilitated flushing the surface with a stream of water to remove accumulated soil and urine. The cumulative effects of the animal waste not only presented health hazards to the animals, but were among the most active elements causing the destruction of the cage floor by breaking down the floor materials. The animal's clawing on the interior wood of the cage also contributed to physical failure. It was obvious that whoever rebuilt the wagon into a tableau, or later modified it for film use, decided that the clean-out doors were no longer necessary. They were eliminated and the sides made solid, with new carvings fastened over them. Examination of photographs of other Hagenbeck cages leaves no doubt that all were built with clean-out doors; they are difficult to see unless one looks specifically for them.

The Baltimore photograph has

been augmented with the discovery of a second photograph showing the rear half of the subject cage during a 1905 Carl Hagenbeck engagement in Kansas City, Missouri. It was one of many that were made by or for the Baker-Lockwood Manufacturing Company of that city. Some were printed in its *Billboard* advertisements and a number were later

copied and sold to collectors by J. W. Beggs. Liberated from obscurity by CHSer Orin Copple King, the cage print and others are now in the Stuart Thayer collection. Unfortunately, the front of the cage is hidden from view in the 1905 photo, concealing the number. A Hagenbeck cage number and contents listing is given in the 1906 Hagenbeck program, but there are not adequate photographs to determine the number of the cage.

In the 1906 procession the cage carried four clowns as top riders, with banners positioned at the corners of the roof. The outside sunburst wheels were painted in pie-shaped sections, at least two contrasting paints being used. Artistically executed scenic paintings, no doubt the ones which impressed Milt Robbins a few years later, covered the sideboards over the barred openings, with a block letter "Carl Hagenbeck" painted on the skyboard and the remainder of the title on the wagon body below. Wagons in 1905 employed the title "Carl Hagenbeck Trained Animal Show" whereas those of 1906 were embellished with "Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows."

All of the Carl Hagenbeck wagons were built by the Bode Wagon Company of Cincinnati. Albert W. Bode (1869-1928), the firm's owner, established a close relationship with the Hagenbeck family as a result of this job. He asked Carl Hagenbeck (1844-1913) to serve as his son's godfather and christened his son, Albert, Jr. (1905-1989), with the middle name Hagenbeck in honor of the famed animal man. In a more practical way, Bode took ads in the show's 1905 and 1906 programs to reward the proprietors for their large volume of business. Not only did Bode build the show's wagons, he also constructed the seats and poles, all of which were valued in aggregate at \$56,939.77 in a 1905 inventory and appraisal.<sup>6</sup>

There had been various Hagenbeck animal shows in the United States as early as a decade prior to the launch-

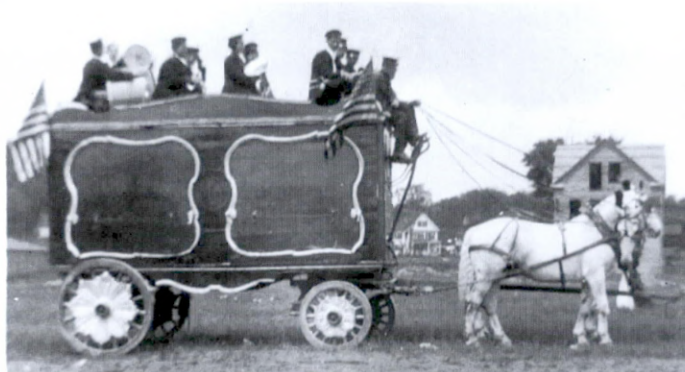


ing of the circus, including a nine car rail operation in 1895 and the exhibit at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Whether prior work for Hagenbeck or his various partners had cemented the relationship for the 1905 venture is unknown. At least one of Hagenbeck's associates was a Cincinnati resident and that may have helped win the order for Bode.

Hagenbeck's representative on the American show, his son, Lorenz (1882?-1956), recalled that Bode undertook the work "with fiery enthusiasm" and complimented him as "one of the most painstaking wagon builders I have ever seen."<sup>7</sup> Bode caused a revolution in the circus wagon business beginning in 1901. Known as a builder of strong and durable beer wagons, Bode enhanced his product range with newly designed circus bandwagons, tableaux and cages of mammoth proportions and carrying capacity. They towered over the lighter and elegant vehicles which had been routinely built by his predecessors in New York, Cincinnati and elsewhere. A hallmark of his new style were large box bodies covered with a profundity of deep bas relief carvings. The wheels bore tires which were four to five inches wide, distributing the great weight of the wagon and its contents over a wider area.

Unlike previous cages, the Hagenbeck dens were bigger in width and height than the baggage wagons of nearly all circuses of 1905, and the three-section dens measured almost twenty feet long. In reviewing the Hagenbeck-Wallace cages of the late 1910s and early 1920s, one can readily discern the massive cages which were part of the 1905 Bode order. One of them has nearly the same configuration as the three-arch American Circus Corporation cages. Several of the cages survived for five years after William H. "Cap" Curtis (1875-1955) joined Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1917. The resilience of these 15-plus year old cages and their physical appearance must have inspired him in the building of even more massive dens. They would not be eclipsed until the winter of 1921-1922, when Curtis embarked on a cage building program for the three troupes of the Corporation.<sup>8</sup>

A review of the weights of similar length cages in the Circus World



One part of the Frank A. Robbins big show band rode the former cage in the early 1910s when this picture was taken. Circus World Museum collection.

Museum collection underscores the advances represented by the 1905 Bode order and Curtis' later work. Cage 60, built for the 1910 Forepaugh-Sells Circus by the Moeller brothers with four heavy corner statues, rolls in at 5,240 pounds. Ringling-Barnum cage 73, which started life as Moeller-built Ringling cage 76 in 1903, checks in at 5,940 pounds, including the heavy metal tank added in the 1940s. By comparison, the reconstructed Carl Hagenbeck cage weighs 7,240 pounds, or almost 50% more. Some of the additional weight, perhaps several hundred pounds, is in the retrofitted carvings. Curtis elevated the technology of cage construction to the next level. The two compartment cage identified as Hagenbeck-Wallace 25 (actually 22), which is nearly the same length as 85, totals 9,160 pounds, nearly a ton more. Other Curtis cages in the Museum collection, all three-section vehicles, run around 8,900 pounds. Weight costs money because it represents more material cost, but it also conveys strength and durability. Bode and Curtis both intended their cages to give many years of service between rebuilds.

Although Bode wagons were solidly built, one detail of their construction was later found deficient by one of Hagenbeck's partners. John H. Halvin (1847-1924) or Frank R. Tate (1860?-1934) stated in a February 3, 1907 letter to their German associate: "I always thought that our cages and dens were the finest ever built, until at Peru I saw them parked into (sic) the paint shop alongside the Wallace dens and I must say that his dens are superior to ours. All his wagons, cages and dens have three-inch [square] axles whereas ours only have two and one-half."<sup>9</sup>

Bode was originally contracted to build 48 wagons for the 1905 Hagenbeck show at a cost of \$38,000.<sup>10</sup> The completed work included one bandwagon, a steam calliope, three tableaux, about 25 cages and the balance in baggage wagons. Though the math yields 18 of the latter, a report in the April 29, 1905 *Billboard* placed 29 baggage wagons on the show. A 1905

Hagenbeck inventory in the CWM files lists 18 sixty-foot flat cars on the 31-car show. If the bandwagon, tableau, calliope and cages fit three per flat, they would fill 10 flats. The remaining flats could hold four baggage wagons each, or about 32 vehicles. The number of 29 would appear to be accurate given the longer length of certain wagons, yielding a wagon total of 59. At the time, it was the second largest order ever placed for circus vehicles in dollar amount, exceeded only by James A. Bailey's 1902 order for parade wagons. It was probably exceeded dollarwise in subsequent years by only the 1917-1919 Frank Spellman Circus, the 1938 Tim McCoy Wild West and James Edgar's 1947 Sparks Circus, the latter two of which arranged for the construction of fleets of metal-bodied baggage wagons. Notably, all five shows with major new vehicle investments failed or encountered difficulties, perhaps confirming Floyd King's insight that the third owner of a circus would make money with it. Bode later constructed two additional tableaux for the Hagenbeck circus at a combined cost of \$3,000 and very likely repaired or replaced the ticket wagon, cages and baggage wagons which were damaged in two rail mishaps in 1906. The 25 cages were numbered between 1 and 33, inclusive, several numbers in the sequence assigned to other wagons.

Prior to the 1905 tour the Hagenbeck show announced that its parade would include 32 vehicles. A review of the procession noted that it comprised about 32 units, among them 24 of the 25 cages, the bandwagon, three tableaux and the calliope.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the show added two additional tableaux for 1906 suggests that they were inadequately represented in that line, though the need was dictated by more wardrobe-carrying capacity as opposed to parade enhancement.

How did the Hagenbeck parade and wagons compare to other shows



of the era? Data is available for Ringling in 1902, Barnum & Bailey in 1903 and 1908, and Forepaugh-Sells in 1905. In 1902 the Ringling operation moved on 65 cars. An inventory tallied 36 cages on the show, most of them older and shorter one or two compartment vehicles. The 1905 Forepaugh-Sells operation loaded 26 cages, including several old and small dens, on its 59 cars of varying lengths. There were 30 cages on the 1908 Barnum & Bailey troupe, which moved on 79 cars. With 25 big cages on its 29 cars in 1906 (two were in advance), the animal presence was obviously emphasized on the show bearing the name of one of the world's leading animal dealers.<sup>12</sup>

The same emphases on animals was present in the parade. The 1903 parades of the 65-car Barnum & Bailey show included 55 different units containing 58 vehicles, of which 19 were cages (eight were tableau cages, which opened on only one side), 26 were bandwagons, tableaux and music wagons, and the balance small chariots and carts. The 59 car Forepaugh-Sells march of 1905 was comprised of 50 units with 37 vehicles, including 23 cages, 11 large wagons and three lesser vehicles. From its 29 cars, the Hagenbeck show fielded at least a 32 unit procession containing 32 to 34 vehicles, of which 24 were cages, five were large parade wagons and the balance small chariots. Again, the animal nature of the Hagenbeck operation was pronounced and proportionally greater than for a typical circus of its size. In addition to the normal parade entries, the opening parade of the 1905 season also included some of the fancy titled baggage wagons of the circus interspersed in the usual order. The Hagenbeck procession took 11 minutes to pass a given point in 1906. Though one scribe said it was shorter than other displays, it was not punctuated by the time-stretching gaps which characterized other circus processions.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the Baltimore and Kansas City photographs, there has been additional circumstantial corroboration of the Hagenbeck-Robinson-Robbins transfer. To understand this new evidence, one must focus attention on the demise of the Hagenbeck show. Through various machinations, Peru, Indiana show



This photograph shows the Frank A. Robbins show parade stretched out on the main street of Wellsville, New York on June 24, 1913. The ex-Hagenbeck cage is at right pulled by a six horse team. Chuck Finley collection.

man Benjamin E. Wallace (1848-1921) and others gained title to the finely crafted Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows and its valuable title for only \$45,000. This was not the first time Col. Ben had acquired another circus under certain pretenses to his great advantage. In September 1899 he conspired with the Donaldson Lithographing Company to acquire J. H. LaPearl's 17 or 20 car railroad show for \$24,000, parts of which he merged into his own operation, selling off the excess.<sup>14</sup>

Wallace's acquisition of the Hagenbeck show solved two problems for him. His own fleet of wagons dated back to the 1890s and needed upgrading. His principal competitors, the Ringlings and James A. Bailey, had both made substantial investments in parade wagons in 1903 and he needed to upgrade in order to meet their challenge. Even the third largest horse opera, Forepaugh-Sells, had been going through a piecemeal improvement program starting in 1902 and provided stiff competition to fourth place Wallace. Though they were well made and provided a neat appearance, Wallace's parades from 1903 to 1906 were still largely comprised of the lighter tableaux and cages which characterized pre-Bode style construction. They were generally the products of Sullivan & Eagle, the hometown carriage and wagon manufacturer. His one new parade wagon was a long 22-foot band chariot from Bode. Wallace's baggage wagons were, to some extent, from Studebaker of South Bend, Indiana, and were also of lighter construction.

It should be noted that there were at least two philosophies on wagon

capacity. Some shows, like Ringling, preferred smaller and lighter loaded wagons, preferring not to get them bogged down on the lot, resulting in loading delays or causing horses to strain in hauling them. The increased train length, from a larger number of baggage wagons, was accepted. Other showmen, such as the owners of the American Circus Corporation, chose to use huge, heavily loaded wagons to minimize their number and economize on the train length.

Wallace's other problem was the unsavory public reputation of the Great Wallace Shows. For as long as he remained a circus impresario, Wallace's operation was rife with graft. The reasons for this are not clear unless Wallace was simply a crook who enjoyed robbing the public or took pleasure in somehow skinning those who visited his show. His circus had all the earmarks of a quality operation, with legendarily good horses, a quality physical plant and a well-regarded performance. The illicit operations caused so much grief that his first partner of seven years, James P. Anderson (1837-1911), opted out in mid 1891. Wallace re-titled his circus Cook & Whitby for three seasons, 1892 to 1894, the only such renaming of a major, sustained, railroad circus operation in the annals of American circus history. By acquiring the Sunday School-clean Carl Hagenbeck name and placing it in front of his own, which no self-respecting showman would ever do, Wallace hoped to overcome the years of bad image. Regardless of the name change, the graft proliferated on his circus, as it did with subsequent Peru-based operations, until the Ringling brothers and the *Billboard* publishing Donaldson family fostered an industry wide cleanup in the early 1920s. The Wallace show endured a tragic train wreck in 1903 and in late 1906 Wallace contemplated selling out and retiring, offering his circus for sale.<sup>15</sup> He changed his mind, however, when Jeremiah J. Mugivan (1873-1930) and John O. Talbott (1861?-1939) joined him in plotting to take possession of the highly regarded 46-car Carl Hagenbeck show.<sup>16</sup>

With his acquisition of the Hagenbeck show, Wallace and his partners owned two complete circus properties and set about combining them into a single traveling enterprise.



The fact that they merged them, instead of operating them separately, suggested that they either had no interest or capability to manage and tour two circuses, or that they were interested in simply the title and physical plant, as suggested above. Photography of the "new" Hagenbeck Wallace Circus, commencing with the opening day parade on April 27, 1907, indicates that Wallace selected vehicles from both show properties for the combined operation. Indeed, in their February 3, 1907 letter to Hagenbeck, Havlin and Tate describe in detail how Wallace went through the equipment of the two circuses, selecting the best of each and anticipating that the cast-offs might generate as much as \$100,000 to cover debts. Wallace's own circus had rolled on 37 cars in 1906. The new combination left Peru on 40 to 46 cars, leaving perhaps as many as 40 railroad cars and 50 wagons at winter quarters.

It is possible that both Wallace and Hagenbeck vehicles not used in 1907 were pressed into service in later years, until the time Wallace sold his circus in 1913. In the interim, Wallace peddled the surplus. Just as he routinely sold his older wagons and the former LaPearl property, Wallace continued to sell other assets as he had done since 1891, probably skinning showmen when demand for wagons was high and availability curtailed, as in the spring. Following the sale of Hagenbeck-Wallace, Wallace's retirement interests included a continuation of excess equipment sales. He bought the physical plant of the John Robinson Circus in 1916 and sold parts of it off until his death in 1921.<sup>17</sup> By then the secondhand equipment business was a means of getting the next generation of showmen to visit him in retirement and to keep abreast of the latest industry gossip, all the while lining his pockets with more money.

From later events, it is now believed that showman Dan Robinson (1865-1919) bought the former Carl Hagenbeck lead bandwagon and the subject cage from Ben Wallace sometime after the 1907 season, likely for the tour of 1909. There is a remote chance that someone else bought them from Wallace and then resold them to Robinson. Given that Wallace and his partners were preoccupied with organizing their new-



The Carl Hagenbeck Circus cage at Disneyland in 1961. Pfening Archives.

ly assembled show for the road in the spring of 1907, any surplus sales would not have taken place until the spring of 1908. With only a one-year gap unexplained, it is not likely that an intermediary bought the vehicles and then resold them just a year later to Dan Robinson. Bill Woodcock stated that Wallace did not like the Hagenbeck bandwagon, choosing to use his longer 1901 Bode-built chariot in 1907. The 1905 Hagenbeck bandwagon was of the same shallow box body arrangement as the Moeller-built Ringling "Swan" bandwagon of 1904, a Bode-made bandwagon on the Ferari-Washburn carnival about 1913, and two Bode-designed bandwagons which were never completed. They all had the side profile of a vertically stretched band chariot and could not carry satisfactory loads, a shortcoming which may have limited their value and utilization by showmen.

Dan Robinson started with a carnival about 1902, added a circus show in 1909, and converted the entire operation to a circus for 1910. For the conversion, Robinson acquired equipment from William P. Hall, bought baggage wagons from Walter L. Main and apparently visited Wallace in Peru to make other purchases.<sup>18</sup> Robinson's circus was bankrolled by several different "angels" including notable grifters who must have had a stranglehold on the show with their mortgages. In early 1911, "Bunk" Allen said that H. E. Allott (Allen's real name) and George Little paid \$29,000 for the 18-car outfit and that it belonged to them and not Robinson.<sup>19</sup>

Following bankruptcy, the Robinson show was bought by the Fiss,

Doerr & Carroll Horse Company, which auctioned it on November 24, 1911 at Indianapolis, Indiana.<sup>20</sup> The sale description stated that the offerings included "the finest cages ever built." The auction catalog listed them as carved. Coverage in the trade journals reveals that Frank A. Robbins was one of the buyers at the sale, acquiring the five cages (numbers 24, 34, 44, 64 and 74) listed in the auction catalog. They sold for between \$150 and \$300, Milt Robbins re-

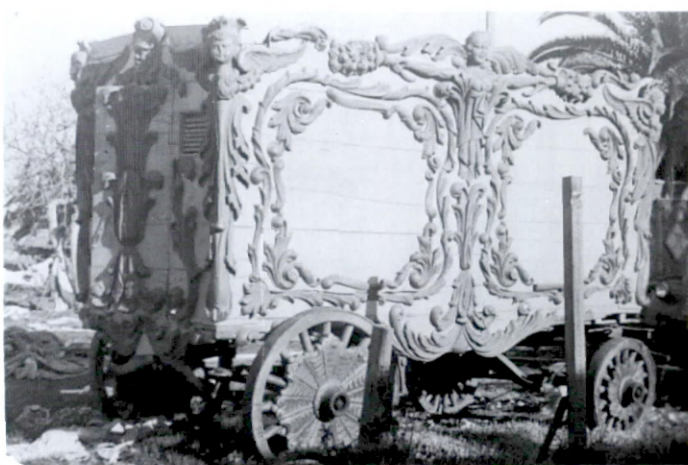
calling that his father paid \$200 for the subject cage.<sup>21</sup> The purchase price represents probably one quarter of the cost of the wagon when new, an indication of the depreciation of value of circus wagons after five years. Another of his acquisitions may have been the former lead bandwagon of the Hagenbeck outfit. Though he had a show of his own, Robbins might have bought it on speculation, as only 24 days after the sale he sent a photograph of the bandwagon to Charles W. Parker (1864-1932), the well-known ride and carnival fabricator and operator of Leavenworth, Kansas. He described it as a \$2,200 bandwagon, recently built and equal to new for only \$500, again, about a three-quarters devaluation from its original cost. The location where it was stored, the American Car & Foundry Works plant in Indianapolis, ties it to the Robinson sale.<sup>22</sup> Parker presumably did not buy the former Hagenbeck bandwagon, which eventually ended up on the 1916 Wheeler Bros. Circus.<sup>23</sup> Accounts of the Robinson sale state that J. Frank Hatch, a carnival owner, bought the bandwagon for \$480. This may have been something other than the Hagenbeck bandwagon, probably one of the three Robinson tableaux, as the Hatch purchase can be traced to other parties through 1916. Robbins did not sell the cage, shipping it back to Jersey City, New Jersey, for his own use.

The last remaining mysteries about the Carl Hagenbeck cage are why the carvings were added to the wagon after circus use and the identity of the person or persons who applied them before 1935. The answer to the "why" question remains unknown. One other wagon located in the same California storage lot was embellished with non-circus carvings about the same time. The steam cal-



lioie styled vehicle which appears in the 1941 film *Chad Hanna* was constructed using the instrument from the last Barnes callopie. The body was entirely different, however, having a low side profile and being arranged unlike any practical steam callopie. In a letter to callopie historian Thomas A. White dated October 10, 1962, circus historian Gordon E. Borders identified one Stan Rogers, a movie studio employee, as the designer of the Chad Hanna callopie. Perhaps this same individual had arranged for the elaborate decorations on the former Robbins wagon, the decorations which for so many years obscured its real origin.

The Circus World Museum will face a challenge when a decision must be made on the future of the cage. As it exists today, it is largely a Disney replica, altered in format from its original configuration but well-known in the present arrangement for the past six decades. Whether it will be denuded of carvings and rebuilt as a replica of its Hagenbeck or Robbins tenure, or remain as is, will rest on a decision by the Museum's management. In its present configuration, it does not represent circus heritage, but an altered filmdom existence. There are significant factors supporting reconstruction. The cage is the fourth known survivor from the Carl Hagenbeck operation, the other pieces being the show's tableaux, generally known by their vernacular names of Lion, Lion & Snake and Elk & Buffalo. The first two are largely intact, while only the side panels of the last survive.<sup>24</sup> As the only extant Bode-built vehicle documenting the cage wagon design advances of 1905, the subject cage is easily the most significant survivor of the group. It would best symbolize that importance by a return to its original appearance. In resuming its original styling, the cage also exemplifies the significance which animals represented in the public presentation of the wild animal-themed Hagenbeck operation. Finally, it provides a stark contrast to today, when the continued utilization of animals for education and entertainment is threatened by economic and moral issues, and the ultimate concerns over the loss of natural habitat and species extinction.



Cage No. 85 in Jimmy Wood's graveyard in Venice, California in 1946. Note the inter carvings that were later cut away for the bars. Pfening Archives.

#### Notes

1. Harry Nelson, "Old Circus Wagons Brighten Junk-Yard," *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1951; *Bay Area News*, November 22, 1951; *Billboard*, January 26, 1952, p. 54.
2. These were shared with C. P. Fox, who released them for publication in the July-August 1975 *Bandwagon*.
3. A few circuses, including the Harris Nickel Plate and possibly Cooper & Bailey, combined the role of cage and bandwagon. The first example in this line was the combination bandwagon and lion cage of the 1870 James Robinson Circus. This wagon's team once ran away after becoming tangled in the harness, causing one wheel to ram a large stone. The roof of the wagon collapsed from the resulting shock to the wagon. The bandmen fell in among the lions, where three were horribly dismembered by the agitated cats. See Clinton, Iowa, June 17, 1870 *Daily Herald*.
4. Chuck Finley Collection, taken on June 24, 1913 in Wellsville, New York.
5. *Billboard*, December 9, 1916, p. 23.
6. Carl Hagenbeck Collection, Circus World Museum (CWM).
7. Lorenz Hagenbeck, *Animals Are My Life*, 1956, p. 57.
8. Stuart Thayer, "The Corporation Cages," November-December 1971, *Bandwagon*, pp. 20-24.
9. Typescript from Brandy Johnson in Tom Parkinson Papers, CWM.
10. *Billboard*, December 24, 1904, p. 22.
11. *Billboard*, April 29, 1905, p. 19.
12. Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. files, CWM; Braathen collection, Illinois State University; Forepaugh-Sells file, Hertzberg Circus Collection.
13. Appleton, Wisconsin, *Evening Crescent*, June 25, 1906.
14. The old Forepaugh globe float was combined with the LaPearl hippo den and

boat-shaped bandwagon by Sullivan & Eagle to make the new Wallace hippo den of 1900. See Fred Dahlinger, Jr., "The Forepaugh Globe Float and The Great Wallace Hippo Den," *Bandwagon*, September-October 1984, pp. 21-24.

15. *Billboard*, December 1, 1906, p. 35.

16. See Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "How Wallace Bought Hagenbeck," *Bandwagon*, July-August 1964, pp. 11-12. The car count is from a Havlin and Tate letter to Hagenbeck. Presumably the

show was expanded for 1906, or else the American partners misled Hagenbeck or did not have the facts.

17. The known Wallace sales included five cages and four cars to Welsh Bros. in 1900; his 1889 Sullivan & Eagle band chariot to the Welsh Bros. about 1902; six cages and a tableau to Burch & Reiss for 1906; two Sullivan & Eagle-built Wallace tableaux to Sells-Floto after 1906; and Wallace's 1897 S&E carved ticket wagon and a Hagenbeck cage to Howes Great London by 1908. Two carloads of equipment went to Al F. Wheeler in 1916 and the c. 1899 Wallace zebra cottage cage to Al G. Barnes in 1919. John Robinson sales included bird cage 57 to Coop & Lent in 1918, tableau 55 to Veal Bros. carnival in 1919, three cottage cages (42, 74 and unknown) to Barnes in 1920 and three other cottage cages (29, 31 and 46) to Sells-Floto, possibly after Wallace died.

18. Letter from Dan Robinson to William P. Hall dated February 24, 1910, William P. Hall Papers, CWM; *New York Clipper*, November 13, 1909, p. 1016; December 25, 1909, p. 1160; April 23, 1910, p. 266; *Bandwagon*, July-August 1967, p. 8. Some have stated that Robinson also bought the famous Wallace steam callopie, the one with dragons, at this time, an indication that additional pieces may have been acquired.

19. *New York Clipper*, March 25, 1911, p. 8.

20. *New York Clipper*, November 4, 1911, p. 13. A copy of the auction catalog is in the Pfening Archives.

21. *Billboard*, December 2, 1911, p. 22, January 20, 1912, p. 23; *New York Clipper*, January 13, 1912, p. 12.

22. Barbara Charles Collection.

23. Wallace supplied some equipment to the 1916 Wheeler operation.

24. The Lion Tableau is in the Circus Galleries at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art; the Lion & Snake, owned by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, is on loan to CWM; and the Elk & Buffalo sides are in the Miami County Historical Museum in Peru, Indiana.



Several articles by Bill Johnston appeared in *Bandwagon* in the early 1990s before he died in Baraboo, Wisconsin on October 24, 1992 while doing research at the Circus World Museum. At the time he had several more articles in unfinished form. His ashes, manuscripts and research notes were sent to his friend Bucky Steele who donated the material to the Circus World Museum. The articles have been edited and augmented by Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

To the wild animal trainer knowledge of his subjects, plus all the working experience he can get with them, are his most valuable assets. However, even with all this working for him things can go wrong. Wild animals are forever unpredictable, and come up with in personality changes when least expected.

Lucky are those trainers with years in the business who can escape serious physical injury. One of the best who spent many years in the big steel arena working with lions, tigers, bears, leopards, and teaching would-be trainers was John C. "Chubby" Guilfoyle.

He was among the top wild animal men during his career. But, then human error intervened when he found himself involved in a battle with five lions. The injuries from this incident cost him his arm.

Despite this handicap he continued in the business, devoting most of his time to the development of other animal trainers, teaching them the craft. Among those he taught were Clyde Beatty, Manuel King and Pat Anthony.

Guilfoyle was born in 1889. His first introduction to wild animals was around 1905 as a cage boy for Alfred Stadler, a Swiss trainer who was raised in Hamburg, Germany where he worked a mixed act trained by George Arstingstall for Carl Hagenbeck. Stadler . In 1894 Stadler came to America to join the Adam Forepaugh Circus where he presented an act with two lions, two tigers, two bears, two leopards, two black leopards, two white sheep and two Uima hounds, an amazing combination of domestic and wild animals.

Stadler eventually allowed Guilfoyle to enter the big cage. After six or seven years gaining experience Guilfoyle found employment at a wild animal farm in Kansas City,

## CIRCUS WILD ANIMAL TRAINERS

# CHUBBY GUILFOYLE

BY BILL JOHNSTON

Missouri where he first trained big cats.

He went on the road with the Rubin and Cherry carnival in 1920, working for the Kannell's wild animal show, presenting a six lion act. He also presented Russian bears and ponies. It was on that carnival he met Harriet de Ballestiere. They were married on June 28, 1920 in Richmond, Indiana.

In 1921 he was on the Mugivan and Bowers' Howe's Great London and Van Amburg Circus. Chubby worked a lion act and presented the elephant-riding tiger. Harriet, or Hattie as she was better-known, was an excellent trainer. She worked a group of dancing lions.

In 1922 the title of the show was changed to Gollmar Bros.-Yankee Robinson. That season Hattie handled a group of pumas, a leopard act and closed the performance with

Guilfoyle on Gollmar Bros. Circus in 1922. Pfening Archives.



Solomon the aerial lion. Chubby presented a mixed group of lions and tigers and was superintendent of animals.

It was on the Gollmar show that Guilfoyle met a teenaged Clyde Beatty and broke him in with a bear act. In his 1933 book, *The Big Cage*, Beatty said: "Three men taught me most of what

I know about animal training--Pete Taylor, Bobby McPherson and Chubby Gilfoyle--and I always think of them as the truest arena friends I've ever had. All accomplished trainers, they combined their skills as showmen with that rare ability to teach green youngsters like myself the various complicated tricks of the game. While I had a natural knack for handling wild animals, I doubt whether I should have gone very far if I had not been properly schooled in the methods of these three gentlemen."

In 1923 the Guilfoyles were on the John Robinson Circus where Peter Taylor was the principal trainer with a fifteen tiger act. Clyde Beatty presented a Polar bear act trained by Guilfoyle. Chubby worked a fighting lion act and Hattie presented a lion riding a horse and again handled the aerial lion finish.

They returned to the Robinson show in 1924 where Chubby presented a group of leopards, pumas, lions, hyenas and a black panther. Guilfoyle broke many wild animals for other trainers working for the Corporation circuses, many for Beatty's acts.

Guilfoyle left the Robinson show for George Christy in 1925 to present a lion and tiger act on Lee Bros. However, he was severely injured while training a European Brown bear in quarters. After he was out of the hospital by the middle of February, he was shifted to the Christy show and given the job of menagerie superintendent. Hattie worked a leopard group on Christy that year.

In 1926 the Guilfoyles joined Arthur Hoffman's Heritage Bros. Circus. He took over the mixed act that had been presented by Dutch Ricardo the prior year, and put together a fighting group of ten lions and six tigers. On April 8th in Durham, North Carolina he was clawed in his left eye by a lion. This accident affected his vision for the rest of his life.

The April 17, 1925 *Billboard* reported: "Durham, N.C.—April 8. Captain John (Chubby) Guilfoyle's



left eye was painfully injured by the slap of a lion, while two leopards fought a death fight and two bears had a fierce round as unannounced thrills on the program of the Heritage Bros. Circus here Monday. Guilfoyle received the injury from the lion's claw during the afternoon animal act.

"The fight of the leopards followed their return to the cage after the afternoon performance. Attendants could not stop the encounter until one leopard had received his death wound, dying a few minutes later. The bear combat came in the morning during the parade while one of the heavy wagons was mired in soft earth thrown up for a water main ditch. The attendants could not separate them."

The following year Guilfoyle was with the Sparks Circus working a lion act formerly presented by Steve Batty. The big eleven tiger act was presented by Franz Woske.

The Guilfoyles returned to Sparks in 1928. Hattie presented a leopard act. An accident occurred in Syracuse, New York on May 25 that was the turning point of Guilfoyle's life. He was working a fast fourteen lion fighting act when human error brought terror to his life. A new male lion, being introduced into the group, was to enter the arena last. However, the cage man unfortunately got the cats mixed up in the chutes, allowing the new cat to enter early. He was quickly jumped by two lions already in the arena. All hell broke loose. Guilfoyle tried vainly to break up the lion free-for-all. He was clawed severely, but finally managed to get the lions out of the big cage. He was then rushed to the hospital where he hovered between life and death for months.

His arm, face, chest and back were badly scared. The surgeons struggled in vain, but were forced to amputate his right arm, leaving only a stump. Franz Woske took over the Sparks lion act after Guilfoyle's injuries.

Guilfoyle returned to the circus in October, assisting his wife with the leopard act. He slowly adjusted himself to his handicapped condition, but never again appeared in a circus performance. He may have felt

a one-armed animal trainer would not go over.

The Guilfoyles were on Sparks in 1929 with Hattie working the leopard act. Chubby assisted her. They left Sparks on September 10 when Frank Phillips came on to handle the leopards and other cats.

In 1930 Bill Kemp was operating a motordrome on the Beckman and Gerety carnival. He wanted to add lions to his show. He hired Guilfoyle to break two male lions, Sultan and Prince and have his sister Marjorie work them. In 1932 Marjorie was mauled by her lions. Her other brother Walker was badly clawed trying to help her. In 1940 while on the Royal American Shows Miss Kemp was again badly injured when the axle of a car she was driving broke while she was driving on the wall of the motordrome. Sultan, who was riding with her in the car, was unhurt.

While with the Kemps in 1932 Guilfoyle was approached by William "Snake" King of Brownsville, Texas about breaking some lions. Guilfoyle agreed to give it a try. W. A. King, Jr. in his 1964 book *Rattling Yours* . . . Snake King tells about his father's association with Guilfoyle. "He [Snake King] put out 'feelers' [his reference to letters of inquiry] about trainers. Some personal inquiries he made were anything but discreet. As a matter of fact, he got downright nosey when it came to the background of specific trainers he had in mind. Dad's investigation may have seemed indiscreet and a little on the haphazard side but it was thorough enough. With his young son's life at stake, Snake King had to be absolutely sure he was entrusting matters to the best trainer available."

Hattie Guilfoyle on the John Robinson Circus 1923. Pfening Archives.

"That man turned out to be John (Chubby) Guilfoyle. Many people would have questioned the wisdom of this choice. I know the immediate family did. There was good reason for doubt—Chubby had only one arm to work with. In the dangerous profession of training the big cats, absence of an arm is a terrific handicap."



Guilfoyle, on left, with Franz Woske on Sparks Circus in 1927. Pfening Archives.

"But Dad had explored his choice from every possible angle and as it turned out, the years proved him right. So it was that when the Beckman-Gerety carnival played at Dallas, Dad made his move. Chubby had just finished training a riding lion in a motordrome for this show. After the Dallas engagement he was scheduled to go to the West Coast to break in some other stock."

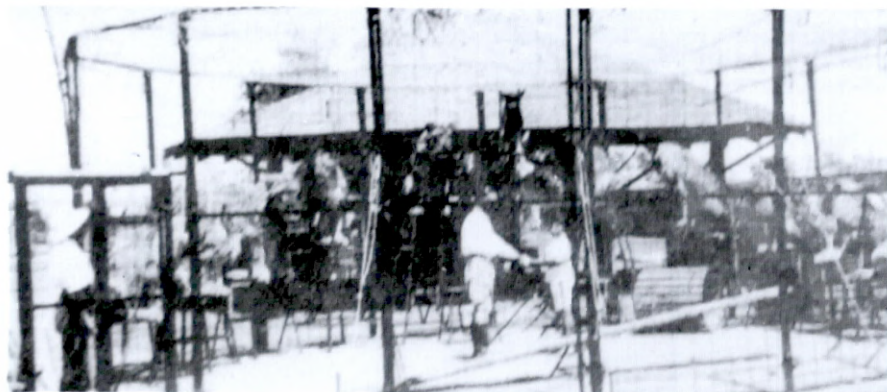
"When Dad first broached the matter of a child working the big cats, Chubby stared at him without commenting; he thought he was joking. When the veteran trainer found out he had his own son in mind, he just knew Dad had slipped his trolley. In the end, Dad convinced Chubby to stop at Snakeville (on his way to California) just for a 'looksee.' The rest is history. He stayed onto launch the successful career of the World's Youngest Wild Animal Trainer."

On September 5, 1933 a severe hurricane hit Brownsville, Texas, during which several animals got loose. A tiger got in a battle with a lion before Guilfoyle could round them up and get them back in their cages. The training arena was wrecked. This was just after the lions had been seat broken.

The act was a sensation and was booked at Young's Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey for the sum-







mer season of 1934. The July 28 *Billboard* reported: "Atlantic City, July 20.—Manuel King, 11-year-old wild animal trainer had the closest call of his short professional career this week in a battle between two animals in his cage at Young's Million-Dollar Pier, where he is the season's feature attraction. The King outfit includes ten lions and two tigers, latter having never before broken into the cage routine.

"It was decided to try breaking in one of the tigers, Shelk, Monday morning. Captain John C. Guilfoyle, who for several years has been teaching King tricks of the trade, was to break the tiger and then turn him over to King later in the season, then to work the two animals with the lions. Everything was going along smoothly and Guilfoyle announced that the tiger was exceptionally well-behaved for the first time in. He went through a simple routine and then young King entered the ring. The tiger obeyed him as he had done Guilfoyle.

"It was then decided to let a lion into the cage, and the lion, true to routine, ascended the stools and found the tiger at the top. Shelk lunged at the lion, then grabbed him by the throat and both battled down to the center of the arena, closing King in a corner furthest from the safety cage. The youngster went into the mass of jungle fury, prodding, calling and whipping as Guilfoyle rushed in from the opposite side of the cage. The tiger turned on King, made a lunge and carried his safety chair and stick away, leaving him with only a small whip. This he used with force upon Sheik as Guilfoyle fired blanks into the faces of the beasts, finally quieting them, after which they were put back in the chute in quick order.

"A crowd on the pier for early showing of a picture gathered and cheered King as he left the cage. A

Guilfoyle and Manuel King in the big cage. Hattie is in the safety cage. Circus World Museum collection.

newspaper man spread the word and a local newspaper played up the fight with a streamer. The pier phone was constantly busy and a special operator was put on as calls about King's safety flooded in. New York papers front-paged the young showman and attendance at the King shows has been doubled ever since.

"Another fight happened between two lions in the early evening show which brought spectators to their feet."

Manuel's brother Bill, Jr. supplied a little different version in his book: "To be sure, Manuel had his anxious moments while working the big cats. But, he must have been 'living right' as they say, for he walked in his big cage over four thousand times and managed to come out [in one piece] a like number. He had a close call the summer his act was featured at Young's Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City.

"Manuel had been honored as Mayor of Atlantic City for a day and during the Children's Week that followed, he decided to spice his act up a bit by mixing in a half-trained Bengal Tiger with his African lions. A raging battle-royal broke out. Instead of clearing out instantly, Manuel jumped into the affray until he broke up the fight. It was precisely such a dangerous free-for-all that had cost Chubby Guilfoyle his right arm. The press and public lauded Manuel's bravery in the face of danger, but Dad and Chubby gave him a good chewing out in private.

"Two veteran trainers figured prominently in Manuel's career: Chubby Guilfoyle and later, burly Bobby MacPherson [veteran American Circus Corporation trainer]. Both were rated tops in their hair-raising profession. Yet, oddly enough

they used altogether different techniques in accomplishing the same objective. Because the average person hasn't the faintest notion just how a puny man goes about making anything as strong and powerful as a lion or tiger do his bidding, I'll fill you in on some more essential details.

"The first time a wild lion or tiger enters the arena; he has it all to himself. The nervous and frightened animal will spend all its time racing around trying to escape. No obstructions (pedestals, etc.) are left in the arena at this time, because the animal might injure itself. After awhile, the animal is allowed to bound out through the chute door and back to its cage. This operation is repeated until the animal gains enough confidence to enter the arena in a calmer frame of mind. The trainer studies the animal (from the outside) to learn all he can about it. Still, later (still from the outside), he will prod the animal gently with a long pole. He might prod an ear, a jaw, a flank, the rib cage, etc., in search of the animal's most sensitive spots. Some of these spots, it is worthy to note, are decidedly off-limits and could easily throw an animal into a rage provoking a savage attack. Pedestals, usually the type that hang on the side of the arena and cannot be bowled over, are finally introduced into the arena.

"Comes the day, finally, when the trainer must enter the arena for the first time—this is a critical stage seldom witnessed by outsiders. The only immediate protection the trainer has is the heavy training pole, a lightweight chair, a whip, a revolver loaded with blanks and his nerve. All are essential; especially the chair which, when properly used, presents an actual obstacle or barrier between man and beast. Improperly used, the chair becomes next to useless. If held too low, it may encourage a fatal leap. If held too high, the animal might attack along the ground. The trainer identifies himself by making soft clucking sounds and repeatedly calling out the lion's name in a reassuring manner. It is not yet time for the trainer to command authority; he poses more as a friend. Once the lion loses the natural hatred towards man, a hatred engendered mostly through fear and suspicion, the trainer begins coaxing his pupil to a pedestal. First, the lion will blunder right into the pedestal or race around it, but eventually, it will suddenly vault on it only to leap off almost as fast. But, it has now



learned that the pedestal will support its great weight and that no harm will result. Soon it will mount the pedestal and stay there, aware that once it does this, the trainer will stop prodding.

"Having trained the lion to stay on the pedestal the next step is to teach it to dismount. This may be the most elementary stage of training, but it is an important and critical one. When the trainer has succeeded, he has learned many important things about his savage pupil. He can judge, for example, whether this animal could do some outstanding trick or whether it should just be allowed to remain a 'seat lion' becoming part of a background pyramid.

"The training method I have just glossed over was the one used by Captain John C. (Chubby) Guilfoyle. The animals he 'broke' (trained) seemed to love him for it. Yet, during a typical performance, the cats appeared noisy and vicious putting on a hair-raising show.

"Bobby MacPherson used a different system, diametrically opposed to Guilfoyle's patient and gentle approach. Mac was impatient, almost brutal, sometimes. He would use an electric pole to terrify a lion into obeying a command. The real tough ones that chose to have it out with him, he would collar and chain, then almost brain them into submission. Don't get me wrong—Bobby Mac definitely knew what he was doing and he applied extremes only when necessary. In the end, both men would achieve successful results.

"But, somehow, I always felt that the cats Chubby trained were safer; especially during those brief moments when you were forced, during the act, to turn your back on them. Mac's lions practically hated his guts—you could tell by the way they glowered at him—however, they did respond to cues. But, this didn't mean you could always count on them to 'follow the script.'

"Live ammunition is not used during actual training sessions, or, for that matter, during performances. There are several good reasons only blanks are used. You could miss the lion and hit someone in the audience. Worse yet, you might wound the an-

imal, in which case it would be a fight to the finish. It should be obvious that the strongest man in the world is no physical match for a lion or tiger.

"Dad used to explain to visitors how a trainer delays firing point-blank in a lion's face until it becomes absolutely necessary in a tight squeeze. After pointing out that only blanks were used, he would explain how the sound of the explosion coupled with the blinding gunpowder flash seemed to exercise a psychological effect on the charging animal which made it pause momentarily. Precisely at the brief instant of hesitation the trainer would take the upper-hand and regain control of the situation.

"And it works every time,' Dad would conclude. Then, about when a rapt listener figured training lions was duck soup, Dad would deliver the clincher, which was always good for a belly laugh: 'Now and then you'll run across some dumb stupid lion that doesn't know the first thing about psychology and that's when the going gets real rough!'

"The first act Manuel worked consisted of five female and five male African lions. Trixie, the Belgian Shepherd dog, incidentally, worked right

Manuel King the boy lion trainer. Pfening Archives.

in with the lions she had been raised with. She graced the top seat of the pyramid. Although the lions now towered over her and any of them could have mangled her with no effort, they never tried to harm her. She would still nip at them (as she had done when they were cubs) when they got out of line. In one of his many tricks, Manuel used two lions, Tanner and Tumbo, to stand at opposite ends of a see-saw; then Trixie would start the seesaw in motion by primly walking from end to end. Now and then Tumbo would give her a little static and she'd put him in his place. Trixie stayed in the act for several years until she died a natural death.

"Yo Yo, the lion that, through circumstance, launched Manuel on his career, was trained to do the 'lay down' trick. He had grown into a massive, magnificent specimen. Manuel would cue him down from his pedestal with a sharp crack of the whip and Yo Yo would come charging down at him. Then he would make the lion lay down and he would lie on top of him, cheek to cheek. With both feet off the ground and his full weight resting on the animal, this was a crucial moment. Manuel had one of his many close calls in the big cage while working outdoors at the Iowa State Fair. There was frost on

the ground, it was cool and the lions were unusually frisky. Yo Yo came bounding down from his pedestal on cue, but when he hit the slippery ground, he skidded into Manuel and both landed in a heap, with the lion on top. It was a tense moment. Whenever anything changes or upsets the precise routine animals become confused. Confusion leads to bewilderment which quickly turns to rage.

"In the safety cage (a small compartment you enter before coming into the arena) Chubby watched the foul-up anxiously. As the confused lion landed on Manuel, Chubby clanged the arena door. This signal was an emergency precaution designed to avert a serious mauling. It told the lion what to do next in the event of a foul-up such as this. Yo Yo, happily, responded to cue instantly like a real trooper. He straightened up astraddle of the boy trainer,





shook his massive frame, then whiled himself back to his pedestal. Amen."

Early in 1936 the King act appeared for twelve weeks at the Casa Manana, an attraction at the Fort Worth Centennial fair.

Later that year King was signed as a feature by James M. Cole whose circus opened in Cleveland and had other dates booked. Cole's plans blew up, but Manuel King was featured in billing for the unplayed stands. Guilfoyle was still with King.

After Ray Marsh Brydon took over the Bays Bros. Circus in the middle of the 1936 season King and his wild animals joined Brydon's Rice Bros. Circus. Snake King framed a circus to feature his son in 1937 titled King Bros. Guilfoyle was part of this show which did not last long.

Interspersed with other bookings Manuel and Guilfoyle went to Hollywood and appeared with Clyde Beatty in the Republic Pictures serial *Darkest Africa* which was later re-issued as *King of the Jungle*. Manuel received billing and screen credit in the film. Guilfoyle, who had handled lions in several earlier movies, had aided King in getting the contract and handling the lions during the filming.

Guilfoyle had a falling out with Snake King because he did not receive a one third cut on the movie deal which he thought he was entitled to. Guilfoyle sued Snake King for \$1,500. A settlement was made and Guilfoyle continued working with Manuel.

In 1938 the King act appeared with the Gran Circo Fernandi in Mexico City. Later that year the act was with Gran Circo Internacional in Vera Cruz, Mexico. Guilfoyle remained with King during this period. As Manuel King grew older he lost interest and the act was disbanded.

Chubby and Hattie established residency in Brownsville and returned there when not breaking wild animals in various parts of the country. They spent a short time on Ben Davenport's Dailey Bros. Circus in 1947, working in winter quarters with the recently purchased Adel Nelson elephants. They then drifted to the California and found work at the World Jungle Compound in Thousand Oaks in 1948 and 1949. Here among a bevy of trainers the



Guilfoyle's portage Pat Anthony on Circus Vargas in 1976. Pfing Archives.

Guilfoyles thought they had reached paradise.

At Thousand Oaks a former paratrooper from Cleveland came to study wild animal training. Pat Anthony, an enterprising young man, had convinced the government to fund his training under the GI Bill.

While in Thousand Oaks Guilfoyle broke Anthony into the business. From his childhood Anthony had admired Clyde Beatty when he played the Orrin Davenport-produced Grotto Circus in Cleveland. Following his discharge from the Army Anthony contacted Beatty about a job. Beatty told him to go to work with the acts at Thousand Oaks. Anthony went to the World Jungle Compound and was struggling when Guilfoyle took a fancy to the young Italian and began working with him. It worked; Anthony learned well from the old mas

Master Trainer John C. Guilfoyle. Pfing Archives.



ter and was soon handling a group of twenty-seven lions. Anthony left Thousand Oaks in 1953 to continue on his own.

Chubby and Hattie had already retired to Brownsville, Texas. But, it was a rough road for Anthony. In September of 1953 he was in an orange grove in Oneco, Florida, with an old truck, an arena, props and seven lions. He had four weeks to break a new act and open with the Hamid-Morton Circus. Fortunately, Chubby and Hattie were there, having come from

Texas to help the youngster out. With Guilfoyle's coaching and inspiration the act came together. When Anthony opened in Memphis in February of 1954 Guilfoyle was there, encouraging him.

Later that year Anthony was booked at a park in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania for the summer. Guilfoyle was again there. Three more lions were added to the act. By fall the act was a winner, and the rest was history.

For many years Anthony was featured with Hamid-Morton, playing Shrine and sponsored dates. He was always dressed in a typical Clyde Beatty white outfit with black boots, emulating Beatty's style in the big cage.

With Anthony on his own the Guilfoyles returned to Brownsville. In a September 2, 1953 letter to Verne Sadler, Guilfoyle wrote: "I have been sick for some time and get lonesome to hear from showfolks. I had a letter from Pat Anthony a few days ago saying he is getting his own act together. I know he can make a go of it. He has what it takes to present a good sensational act. It seems the public always likes a thrill act."

"I have trained both kinds. Had Manuel King with the James Cole truck show that opened in the Cleveland Stadium in 1936."

"I hope to be able to get out again in a few months. Now my doctors forbid any training so I am awaiting the time when I can go to work again."

Guilfoyle continued to break animals for his close friend Clyde Beatty. As late as 1953 Beatty had nine lions in his act that were trained by Guilfoyle.

John C. Guilfoyle died on August 5, 1968 in Brownsville. Hattie died on January 20, 1972 in San Antonio, Texas.



1897

"Every spring just before starting on the road," according to the Argentine, Kansas, *Republic*, March 11, 1897, "the old bruiser gets on the rampage." The "old bruiser" was Lemen Brothers' "Rajah, The Largest Elephant that walks the Earth, 2 Inches Taller and 3 Thousand lbs Heavier than Jumbo."

"Last Sunday [March 7] Rajah, the monster elephant of Lemen Bros.' Circus killed a Shetland pony at their winter quarters in the West End. The pony broke loose and wandered into the elephant department when Rajah wound his trunk around one of the pony's legs and raised it some fourteen feet high then slammed it on the floor so hard they could scarcely find a grease spot. It is not likely that he will ever meet his match until he tackles the cage of big lions when it will be good evening Rajah."

An advertisement appeared in the *Republic* on April 15 with subsequent insertions on the 22nd and 29th.

Beneath the heading of, "Will Exhibit in Argentine May 1, '97." Was a cut of Rajah who was described as, "The Biggest Brute on Earth! The Biggest Born of Brutes! The Biggest Feature Yet!"

It was the same ad used in 1896. Mentioned was, "The only Boxing Kangaroo and Positively the only White Sea Lions."

It was well known that all kangaroos fight under the Marquis of Queensbury Rules, and that all White Sea Lions are worshipped by the natives.

Perhaps not so apparent was the "\$1,000,000 Invested in this Great Show," and the "\$2,500 Daily Expenses."

The ad claimed "1,000 People, Horses and Animals" but made no mention of how many were human, how many equine and how many mere animals.

"It Never Divides, Never Changes Its Name, Never Changes Its Date of Exhibition."

The ad closed with the interesting statement that, "Positively no Gambling or Swindling Allowed on the Grounds."

The band arrived in winter quarters on April 27.

Speaking of show day, the *Republic* predicted that, "If it

# ONLY BIG SHOW COMING THE GREATEST GLORY OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Vol. V. Chapter 2. Part Two

By Orin Capple King

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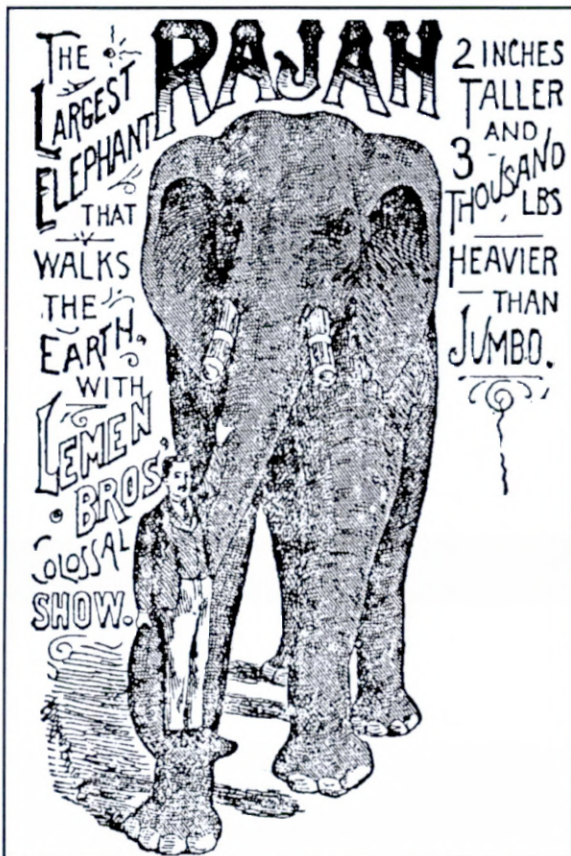
don't rain it will be a great day for the Silver City." If it rained on May 1, the *Republic* did not say. "The only report of show day stated that Judge John T. Sims and Attorney A. W. Little of Kansas City, Kans., took in Lemen Bros.' Show in this city Saturday." Without the judge and the lawyer there is no proof that the date was played.

Following opening day Lemen Brothers exhibited in Missouri, Iowa,

Rajah as depicted in 1897 Lemen Bros. Circus newspaper ads. Pfening Archives.

first. Scores of fearless horsemen and horsewomen, and teams of horses blooded and in their prime; Arabian and Kentucky thoroughbreds, fleet of feet (sic). Sleek and handsome. There are Roman, Standing and Chariot Races, two and four-horse; there are Steeple-chases, Hurdle Races; Flat, Trotting, Racking and Running Races; there are Pig and Pole, Sack and wheelbarrow, Man vs. Indian Pony. Obstacle, Pony and Monkey, Clown, Mule and Goat Races, Elephant and Camel, Deer and Hound, Man vs. Man and Woman vs. Woman Races. In a word, all kinds of races ever ran will be duplicated, and many novel ones introduced at Lemen Brothers' Big Circus here Thursday August 26th."

In an adjacent column was another handout. "We had been a long time prepared to announce the coming of a big circus to Walnut on Thursday, Aug. 26, the day and date now being positively fixed for the appearance of Lemen Brothers' World's Monster Shows. Reports from our correspondents in other places, and from our various exchanges along the line by which the big show is coming, tell wonderful tales of the glorious and triumphant march of this magnificent and marvelous tented amusement giant. A mere newspaper notice, no matter how extended, can not tell a tenth of the wonders which the great tents are credited with holding. There is a large Three-Ring Circus, a monster Menagerie, which by the way, is entirely distinct and separate from the Wild Beast Show, which consists of all kinds of savage brutes exhibited in startling performances in a huge, steel-barred circular cage, the same as seen in European capitals, New York and the Chicago and





Atlanta exhibitions. Then there is a real Roman Hippodrome, and a world of wonders, which space forbids a detailed account of here. All in all, the Lemen Shows are held to be a most surprising and pleasing unification of all that is new and wonderful in the great circus world, and our people may expect to be agreeably surprised at the marvelous exhibition which will be seen here Aug. 26th."

It is amazing how many words a press agent can use to say nearly nothing.

The only advertisement appearing in the *Eagle* featured a cut of Kitty Kruger, "The World's Champion Four and Six Horse Rider." Other advertised features were "The Mighty Bovalapus, the rarest, strangest, awfulest of all the mighty monsters of the deep;" Capt. Santiago, High Diver; Little Edna, "The girl wonder. The only lady turning forward and backward somersaults on a bareback horse;" Racing Steers, "A Grand Novelty;" Also on exhibition was a "Complete, Largest, Greatest World's Menagerie consisting of Whole droves and herds of Animals, Giant Camel, Long Maned and Tailed Horse, Baby Hippopotamus, Baby Lions, Serpents and Birds."

Reports frequently mention baby lions, but there is no mention of a baby hippo.

The *Eagle* warned its readers about "fakirs, sharks and confidence men.

"Have nothing to do with them. Take no chances in any of their games. You have no possible show of beating them at their own tricks. Take no money with you only what is necessary to pay your actual expenses that day and you won't be tempted to 'bite.' Don't be a 'sucker' and let them swindle you out of your money and then say they did not 'tote' fair."

Following show day the *Eagle* reported that, "the show drew a large crowd. There were probably close to three thousand people in town. The show was very good, but there was a set of cutthroats connected with it of the worst kind. Several were swindled out of from five to sixty-two dollars. The suckers bit and were relieved of their money."



The Lemen Bros. bandwagon in an 1897 parade in Detroit, Minnesota. Pfening Archives.

And in another column, "The show has come and gone and with it went the money of the 'sucker.' The 'fakir' lives off the 'sucker.' If there were no suckers the fakir would have to go out of business. The fakir wants to get the sucker's money for nothing (and he gets it to) and the sucker wants to get the fakir's money for nothing, and he gets in a horn. In principle there is no difference between the fakir and the sucker. The one is as deep in the mud as the other one is in the mire. Both are gamblers and both are liable to prosecution under the laws of the state of Kansas. The most disreputable act in the business is the capper, who for a few pennies allows himself to be used to swindle his friends and neighbors."

Lemen Brothers' advertising car arrived in Coffeyville over the Katy railroad on August 15.

Using a more elaborate three-column advertisement the show promised to visit Coffeyville "No Sooner, No Later" than August 27. The ad in the Daily Journal urged the public, "GO AND SEE THE BEST. GO AND SEE THE BIGGEST, GO TO THE ONLY BIG SHOW AUG. 27.

"Hurrying on its massive trains bring all tented wonderland. Biggest tent, more trains, more cars, more artists, more acts, more features than any show coming this way. A world of wealth in a mighty sea of wonders. 1,000 men and horses, best band, best circus, largest menagerie."

Aside from Rajah, "the biggest born of brutes," the ad named TOM, "The Boxing Kangaroo;" SABAD, "The Giant Camel;" JUNAN, "The Only White Sea Lion;" and "The

Monster Man-Eating Lion, NERO."

The ad boasted that, "The greatest, longest High Diver the world has ever seen, SANTIAGO, will leap from a fire ladder 100 feet in height every day at the show grounds promptly at 10:30 a. m. and 6:30 p. m. Free! Don't fail to see him. "General Admission 50. Children under 9, 25c."

The evening edition of the *Journal* carried the following: "The Big City Show Is Here.

"Lemen Bros. Magnificent hippodrome, menagerie and spectacular show arrived on time early this morning, over the Katy. An immense train of cars, conveying over two hundred attaches of the circus and numberless wagons, countless cages, great array of animals, canvas and fixtures, pulled into the depot, much to the gratification of the small boy and fruit vendors. The spectators began to arrive simultaneously with the circus, and every road leading into Coffeyville was filled from daylight until noon, with a stream of vehicles bearing a happy family enroute to the big show. Col. E. J. Gosney, the genial manager, was an early caller at THE JOURNAL office, and we were delighted to renew an acquaintanceship formed several years ago. He took us around and we had the pleasure of looking at 'Rajah,' the largest elephant on earth, the two baby lions, six weeks old, the cutest little savage beasts we ever saw, and a lot of the finest horses, ponies and small animals that ever accompanied a single aggregation into this city. Our old friend Col. Tom Ford, whom we have known in connection with the 'show business' for eighteen years, gave us the 'glad hand,' and to him and Col. Gosney we are indebted for numerous favors. The attaches of the circus are of a superior class, and we were glad to meet a number of former acquaintances, among whom was Prof. Riley, the keeper of Rajah, who has had charge of that immense and ferocious beast for over twenty years. The street parade at half past ten o'clock was witnessed by ten thousand people. It was all that was anticipated, and assured the great throng that the show was all right. The feat by Capt. Santiago, who





dived from an extension ladder at a height of 115 feet, into a net. We were delighted that it was Capt. S, and not the writer who had that feat to perform. Everybody will go to the show tonight. We all want to see the Boxing Kangaroo and Little Edna, the only female somersault rider in the world, for whose equal \$10,000 is offered by the Lemen Bros."

A handout written by a breathless press agent appeared in the Parsons Independent ahead of show day, August 28. "CAPT. SANTIAGO. The World's Highest and Longest Diver."

"This astonishing individual, Captain Santiago, uses no parachute, like ordinary, every day aeronauts; he leaps into no river's open bosom, like your tiresome bridge jumpers; he carries no let-me-down-easy balloon paraphernalia, but simply ascends the towering structure, the climbing of which alone is a feat few men would undertake, and reaches the summit of the very topmost pinnacle, appearing to those far below him no larger than an eagle on a mountain's crest. He shouts gaily, throws out his arms, bends forward slowly over the great, frightful, yawning, gaping space between him and the earth, ever so far below him; plunges down, down, down! Falling swiftly as the swallow darts; coming rushing, sweeping tracklessly through the awful void, heels top, head down--surely, every frightened observer thinks, to instant death. Suddenly he turns; swift as lightning is the turn made, and as swiftly made back again, and for many yards this fearless, fighting fireman turns somersaults. He suddenly makes his body rigid, and seems to stop his flight momentarily by doing

Little Edna as depicted in 1897 Lemen Bros. newspaper ads. Pfening Archives.

so. Now he loosens again and descends slower, and with an agility scarce to be believed, even when seen, he lands safe and sound. Capt. Santiago can be seen by all, free as the air you breathe, doing this twice-once in the morning, once in the evening--on the circus grounds at Parsons on Aug. 28, with Lemen Brother's World's Monster Shows."

The Parsons *Weekly Sun* after the show had come and gone reported in a story probably written by the circus press agent, that, "The day was almost an ideal one for a circus, being clear and pleasant, with a refreshing breeze from the south. Early in the morning people from the country and surrounding towns began to arrive in the city in all kinds of conveyances, all of them loaded to their utmost capacity, and by the time the hour set for the parade arrived the streets along the line of march were jammed with people."

"The parade was a very creditable one and was followed to the circus grounds by large crowds to see the thrilling dive made from the ladder one hundred feet high which is made twice each day, at 10:30 a. m. And 7 p. m. Regardless of the weather. This exhibition is free."

"One noticeable feature about the horses, besides their fine appearance and the evidence they show of being well kept, is the fact that they are all dapple grey in color."

"In the menagerie tent, in addition to the animals seen in every first-class menagerie, were two baby lions that were very playful and looked

like overgrown kittens. Rajah, the big elephant, is thirteen feet high, two inches higher than Jumbo. There are also a pair of fine elks that are being trained to drive in harness and will soon be an attractive feature of their parades."

"The ring performance, which is given in two rings and on a large platform, is an excellent one containing many novelties. Little Edna, the child bareback rider, is a wonder. She is the only child turning a backward somersault on the bareback of a running horse."

"The many other acts are all entertaining and well performed and yesterday pleased two of the largest audiences that have witnessed the performances of a circus in this city for years."

Under the heading of "\$15.00 for a Circus License" the Parsons *Eclipse* of September 1, complained about several aspects of the Lemen show.

"The business done by the Lemen circus in this city on Saturday was probably as large as the receipt of any one day since the show has been on the road this season. The city ordinance in relation to shows of this character says that the license shall be fifty dollars and five dollars for each side show. The city clerk says that the Mayor instructed him to issue a license for \$15.00. Inasmuch as quite a number of extra policemen were appointed for show day, the price of the license will be seen to be very moderate to come from a 'revenue' administration."

"The Lemen shows have a new feature which it is not necessary to advertise on the hand bills. It is a 'lawyer' who accompanies the show. His first duties on reaching a town seems to be to load up the mayor with dead head tickets, and then the councilmen, justices of the peace, police judge, etc. In giving one of our justices four tickets the lawyer also offered him a small roll of bills. The proffer of the tickets was accepted, but when the money was offered the justice refused to accept it as it was apparent that there was some sinister motive in the transaction. A little later it was apparent that at least it was the sympathy of the officers of the law that was wanted as gambling devices and even the three shell game was worked and also the short change racket."

"The license for shows of this character range from one to two hundred dollars in the leading towns. Considering the amount of money that the Lemen show took out of this city on Saturday one hundred dollars



would have been very reasonable, and the requirements of the ordinance, which makes it fifty dollars would have been little enough. Why the ordinance in this matter should have been disregarded is not apparent at all and the matter will admit of a few explanations."

In another column the *Eclipse* reported two accidents at the matinee. "A horse fell down with a female rider and the result came near being fatal to the rider. A lad who was tumbling undertook to turn a somersault and alight on another tumbler's shoulders but missed his footing and fell."

The horses of W. O. Barr, hitched to his bakery wagon, were frightened by the elephants and ran away causing considerable damage to the wagon.

A handout in the *Daily Traveler* heralding show day at Arkansas City on September 23, praised the act of Kitty Kruger.

"The champion four and six horse equestrienne, whose fame is boundless in five continents, will, at each performance of Lemen Bros.' World's Monster Shows, ride, drive, manage and handle her spirited team with dash, grace and skill that has never had an equal. Miss Kruger also introduces her diverting burlesque act of impersonating a country girl performing an equestrian bareback act on a mule, always received with hilarious applause. Lemen Bros will be here September 23."

Another handout reported a "Cow-girl Riding a Steer," but the rider was unidentified and the act was not confirmed in any review of the circus.

On show day the *Traveler* reported that, "Lemen Bros' circus was here today in all its glory and a big crowd was in the city to attend it. The circus arrived at about 3 o'clock and by 9 o'clock had its three big tents up. The parade came off at 11 o'clock and was witnessed by a large concourse of people. It was a very creditable parade. This afternoon the crowd that attended the performance was large and were satisfied with the performance. The audience this evening will be as large as the afternoon."

The *Traveler* also observed that, "a woman with a two weeks old baby stood on the street two hours this morning watching for the circus parade."

And, concerning Capt. Santiago, "This morning a very large crowd of people went to the circus grounds to witness the negro make his 100 foot



Two elephants in an 1897 Lemen Bros. parade. Pfening Archives.

dive. Marshal Callahan talked about arresting the crowd because they were at a negro dive."

Following show day the *Traveler* remarked that, "The Lemen Bros' circus is gone. It had a big audience in attendance last night. The menagerie is poor, in fact very poor. The circus performance was very good. Especially the bareback riding of little Edna."

A series of short blurbs appeared in the *Daily Walnut Valley Times*, El Dorado, ahead of the exhibitions there on September 24.

"The trained zebras with Lemen Brothers' Big Shows are a curiosity. Will be here Sept. 24th." Nowhere is there confirmation of trained zebras.

"The French Family, Maretta's, (sic) are features of Lemen Brothers' Best Show which exhibits here Sept. 24th."

"The mother of the Marietta (sic) sisters, with Lemen Bros. Circus lives on a farm in Sumner county. Her name is Myers. Little Edna is a grand daughter of Mrs. Myers. The Marietta sisters have been traveling as circus performers for thirty years."

The *Osage City Free Press*, speaking of the exhibitions of September 27, reported that, "Lemen Bros.' Show the greatest crowd ever seen in Osage City at a show came in to see Lemen Bros.' Circus and menagerie last Monday. The show had come in over the Santa Fe Sunday morning and had attracted a good deal of attention through the day."

"The parade was delayed in the morning at the request of Superintendent McDonald, who wished the pupils of the schools to see it. It was of unusual length and was very attractive."

"The show possesses many fine features. The jumping of Capt. Santiago was a thrilling performance. It may be safe enough but all the corn in Osage county wouldn't induce us to do it. The ladder from the top of which he jumped was claimed by the

show people to be 100 feet high and when he was up there and about to make the plunge headforemost, it looked about a thousand. The elephant Rajah is a monster. He is undoubtedly the biggest elephant on exhibition in this country today. He is a bad elephant. His temper is bad and he is apt to break loose and kill a dozen or two people before he is captured. There are two baby lions in the show only six weeks old. Another curiosity with a history is 'Bill McKinley,' a baby lion a little over a year old. McKinley was brought up on a bottle and is a fine healthy cub. He is the young lion that was partly swallowed by a boa constrictor at Kansas City last winter. The boa woke up hungry one day and, seeing McKinley, and without due respect for his dignity as king of beasts and named after the President of the United States, began to swallow him and had him half way in his jaws when discovered by the attendants, who were attracted by William's earnest protests. It was with great difficulty that he was rescued. The gentlemanly press agent has a great story to tell of this and another lion. The two were born in the spring of 1896, he said, one the day McKinley was nominated and the other on the day Bryan was nominated. The one was named Bill McKinley and the other Billy Bryan. McKinley lost his mother before he got his eyes open to see her. But the show people were determined to give him a fair show, so they rigged up a bottle and he took to it as readily as human cubs do. Both lions got along very well until near election time last fall when "that tired feeling" seemed to come over Bryan and the night after election he turned up his toes and died. That, as we recollect it, is the story told by the press agent. If that isn't it exactly we'll guarantee that it's as good a lie as the one told by the agent. We've been in the newspaper business too long to permit a press agent of even so great a show as Lemen's to tell a bigger lie than we can.

"Then there was the wonderful Bovalapus-But we didn't see the Bo-



valapus and therefore won't say anything about it."

In other columns the *Free Press* stated that "Goss Brothers furnished meat and groceries for the circus last Sunday and Monday. They furnished altogether nearly a thousand pounds of meat."

"The first days of this week were extremely hot. On Sunday afternoon the mercury stood at 92 in the shade and Monday was little if any cooler. Rain is badly needed."

Yates Center enjoyed Lemen Brothers on September 29. The Yates Center News related that, "Lemen Bros. Show drew a large crowd to town Wednesday and the attendance at the show in the afternoon was large, and the performance good. The parade was up to the expectation of the crowd. The wild animal department was well represented, especially did the big elephant attract lots of attention. What was perhaps the most noteworthy event of the day was the darkey's high dive from a fifty foot tower. This was watched by thousands, who loudly cheered the performer. At night the attendance was light and the show was correspondingly short. One feature which was notably absent was the gamblers and fakers. Sheriff Hunt says the men belonging to the show were all gentlemanly, and that neither he or his deputies had the least particle of trouble during the day. The show went from here to Chanute."

The Chanute *Daily Tribune* in reviewing the performances of September 30, mentioned a feature not reported in other towns. "The side show has the 'only and original ouche-couche dance,' Mr. Gosney

says." E. J. Gosney was the circus press agent.

When the evening performance was over and the train loaded Conductor Williams and Engineer Mote took the show to Iola.

The only memorable aspect of the Iola exhibitions on October 1, was the buckets of ice water set out for the parade watchers by merchants Contant and Klanman.

Five days before the Ottawa exhibitions on October 2, Lemen Brothers' advertising car arrived and paped the town.

As usual Rajah did not appear in the parade. The Ottawa *Evening Herald* explained that, "He is a mean fellow and has a habit of walking into grocery stores and other places and helping himself, so they scarcely ever take the old fellow out on the streets."

"While the show was excellent last night," the *Herald* noted, "the printed programs were confusing. The introductory and finale were on the same page, but the whole program was printed on three pages. To a reader the show began in the middle and went both ways."

The Ottawa *Daily Republican* carried considerably more circus news than did the *Herald*. One story concerned a "Circus Struck" girl.

"An Osage county man by name Goodrich, was in the city Saturday in quest of his niece. The girl is about 15 years old, very pretty, country reared and inexperienced in worldly ways. Wednesday last she went to the Lemen Bros' circus at Osage

The Mighty Bovalapus as depicted in 1897 Lemen Bros. newspaper ads. Pfening Archives.

City, and was captivated by the tinsel and glitter of the array; she concluded that she would like to try the life.

"Thursday she disappeared from her home, which is near Lyndon, and the uncle set out in search of her. From remarks made by the girl he had a clue as to her intent; he found her trail and discovered that she had walked to Ottawa. [Lyndon to Ottawa is about 36 miles.]

"He sought the officers here Saturday, but they had no information for him; he haunted the show grounds, but saw nothing of the girl; and toward night was about to return home discouraged when he luckily chanced to meet her on Main street. It required but a few minutes of persuasion to gain her consent to return with him, and they left for Osage together."

A clown photographer working the walk-in encountered a prominent Kansas politician.

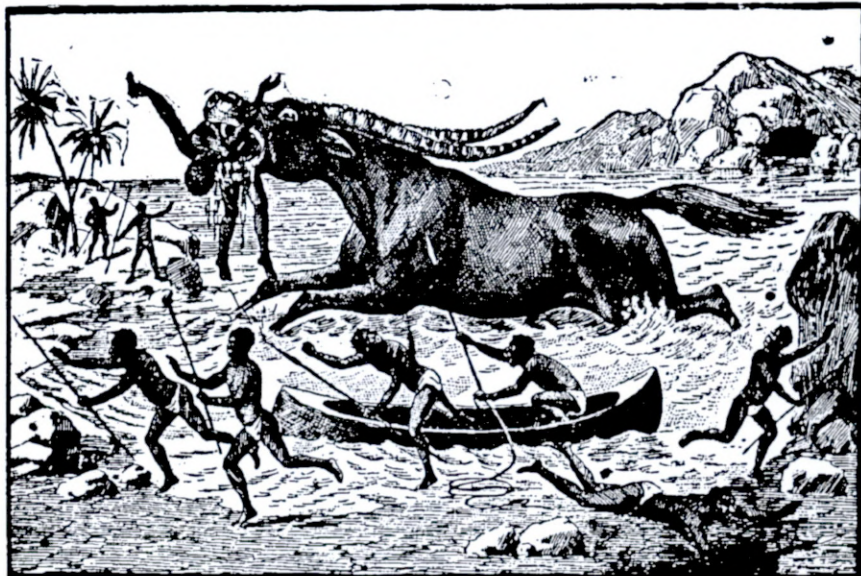
"Mr. Henry J. Allen, of the Inter Ocean, formerly of the evening *Herald*. 'Took in' the circus Saturday night. He saw it all. If there was any part of the program, from the Couches dance to the loading up of the animals at the close that he didn't see, it was because it didn't happen. The wonders of the menagerie kept him in rapt dalliance with pleasurable curiosity until such time that it was late when himself and lady-he escorted the wife of a club friend-got into the main tent. As he was about to make use of his reserved seat press coupons, a kodaker met his eye; a dapper young man with a tripod and covered camera was just composing a section of the reserved seat patrons for a 'shot.'

"Ah," said he, noting Mr. Allen's evident interest, 'would you like to be one of this group, sir? Yourself and lady (very politely). Doesn't cost a cent, sir. We only 'take' the best people, sir.'

"As has been remarked in these annals Henry was out for all there was in the show. And the subtle flattery of the reference to 'quality'--for Henry has nailed the colors of the 400 to his masthead--captured him. He signified assent--particularly as it didn't cost a cent.

"'Thanks. Please take a position right here, sir, and your lady thus, half facing--ah, good, just right,' and the young man placed Henry and his companion prominently out on the hippodrome track, a focus for 2,000 pairs of eyes.

"'Be kind enough,' he continued earnestly, 'to gaze carelessly--but





steadily--over each other's shoulders for a moment,' and he stationed Henry in an attitude that probably came down from the stone age.

"And thus the two victims stood, gazing with that assumption of careless unconsciousness of surroundings that is so easy to acquire when one knows himself to be the center of 4,000 eyes in a circus tent, while the dapper young man juiced up his tripod and cloth covered paper box and stole away unobserved by everybody--but the 2,000 observers.

"Rubber!"

"Raise yer chin!"

"Look pleasant!"

"See a air ship, mister?"

"Go home, country. It's chore time."

"These and a score of other similar calls finally brought Henry down from a contemplation of the tip of the plume over his companion's shoulder, and he glanced about to see what progress was being made.

"Some people 'tumble' easily. But Henry didn't. He just grabbed his lady's arm and started in pursuit of the artist. He wanted that picture.

"It was only when the kodak fiend played his prank on a later arrival that our Dixie tramper 'caught on' to the fact that he was being laughed at by a couple of thousand people. If he was sold before you could have got him for a cancelled postage stamp then."

Henry J. Allen, despite the animosity of rival editors, became governor of Kansas, 1919-1923.

One Ottawa resident had good reason to remember circus day, as reported by the Republican. "A scalp wound several inches long, on Pug Busher's head was sewed up Saturday night. It was the result of a fracas at the circus grounds, in which a tent stake played a star part."

The Strong City *Derrick* had little to say about the appearance of Lemen Brothers on October 4, but two miles away in Cottonwood Falls, the Chase County *Leader* warned the public about the fakirs traveling with the show.

"Beware, when visiting the circus, of the man who offers his services to show you around.

"Persons who attend the circus, next Monday, should bear in mind that it is a very foolish thing to monkey with any game with which some one is traveling for a living."

Following show day the *Leader* reported that, "The largest amount



Many of the Lemen Bros. Circus cages were of light construction and had no carvings. Pfening Archives.

lost by gambling at the circus was \$14, and the largest part of that sum was earned at the wash tub by the wife of the man who lost it.

"Pete Schimff," according to the *Leader*, "got mixed up with the shell game men traveling with the Lemen circus last Monday and received a couple of slight cuts. He knocked three or four of them down with his fists before he was cut."

Newton saw Lemen Brothers on October 5. After the show had come and gone the *Kansan* passed on some "inside information.

"In the circus, the man who plays the steam calliope is a remnant of the steamboat days on the Mississippi river. In the good old time he played a calliope on a big boat. He has never been out of a job.

"Every big circus carries with it a full set of books and competent accountants. They work harder than the canvasmen, and got no more rest.

"The African elephant, which is discovered by people through its large ears, is becoming a rarity and hardly any circus undertakes to carry more than one.

"Circus people have their social grades and people who appear in the ring together frequently are strangers on the street.

"The employees of a circus are usually paid on Thursday. They are paid in cash. Each man has a bank of his own somewhere and on pay day the local express, post office, and telegraph offices are crowded with circus employees dispatching their money."

Newspaper editors were frequently grieved by some circus patrons. "That strange as it may seem, there are people who will spend from fifty cents to five dollars at the show Tuesday, who can't possibly afford to

subscribe for the *KANSAN* at ten cents a week.'

Great Bend did not see the Lemen show promised for October 6, for reasons explained by the Great Bend *Register*.

"The Lemen Bros. Show billed to appear in the Bend Wednesday was wrecked that morning at Hutchinson. Two of their people were killed and several badly injured. One of their long cars on a side track was run into some way by another train. As a result it was too late in the afternoon when they arrived here to exhibit and they did not unload. A very large crowd waited all day long in town and there was much disappointment expressed. The owners of the show squared all their accounts while in town and favorably impressed all who met them. They will exhibit here next spring about May 1st."

The October 7 Hutchinson *News* described the tragedy as follows: "Lemen Brothers' circus train was wrecked at the west end of the Santa Fe yards in this city Wednesday morning. The train was enroute for Great Bend from Newton where the show was exhibited Tuesday evening.

"Those killed and injured in the wreck were: Wm. Bauguese, Osage City, Kan., instantly killed.

"Albert Ward, Eureka, Kan., seriously injured internally and left shoulder fractured.

"J. W. Brown, Patterson, N. J., a slight wound in the left arm and chest.

"The wreck occurred apparently from the rear trucks of a car near the center of the train jumping the track at the point where the Hutchinson cut off for Kinsley begins. The rear trucks of the car caught upon the branch track and followed it, while the front part of the car continued west on the main line. The two cars



back of this followed upon the branch track. The wrecked car was carried suspended between the main line and cut-off about three cars distance, where it overturned and the train was brought to a complete halt.

"The wrecked car carried one large wagon loaded with stable tents, tent poles and ladders, and heavy paraphernalia used in the circus performance. Four of the canvas men, whose names appear above, were sleeping on the wagon and were hurled into the ditch when the car was overturned. Bauguess, who was killed outright, was caught under the wreck, from where he was dug out soon afterwards.

"It is difficult to understand just how the wreck occurred, but it seems most probable that the long car which was wrecked was raised from the track from its own springing motion. There was apparently nothing wrong with the switch, and about half of the train had passed over all right.

"The engine had stopped a little distance back to take water and the train could not have been going at a rate of more than eight or ten miles per hour.

"The car that was wrecked was about the center of the train of twenty cars. The animals were on the front part of the train and their cars were uninjured. A very large and viscous (sic) elephant which is kept chained continually was just ahead of the wreck.

"A few cars further back were the bunks where most of the canvass men were sleeping. They were considerably shaken up but none were seriously injured. Only three cars were derailed and the couplings were not broken.

"The injured were cared for as soon as possible. D. S. Sidlinger, the company's physician, was summoned immediately and attended the me.

"Wlm. Bauguess, who was killed, had just joined the show at Osage City. He was a single man and 35 years old.

"Albert Ward's injuries are serious, although they may not prove fatal. He was taken to the Midland Hotel, where he is being cared for at present. This evening he was resting somewhat easier. Bakersfield is also at the Midland, and is resting easy. Brown was removed today to the hospital at Topeka. All four of these had recently joined the show."

"Lemen Bros.' Show drew a big crowd to town [Kingman, October

COMING

## LEMEN BROS'. WORLD'S BEST SHOWS!

3 RING CIRCUS, MONSTER MENAGERIE and ROMAN HIPPODROME

Positively presenting some Absolute Marvelous Performers and High Class Acrobatic Spectacles that all the citizens of America can continue to produce. A company of 100 Artists, including only the best of the world's most famous and celebrated performers in every line.

# RAJAH!

The Largest Elephant that walks the earth.

Two inches taller than Jumbo, and weighing 10,000 lbs. more than any elephant ever in captivity. A travelling giant of his kind.

# Edna

The Greatest Female Acrobat and the most perfect artist of the world. All her stunts being done alone that no animal can equal. The world's greatest trick, the "Edna" stunt. The only other performer in the world who can do this stunt. The only woman in the world who can do this stunt.

# The LaRose Family

A French Acrobatic Family. Fourteen, Capable of performing a full range of stunts. Their stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared. Their stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared.

# Miss Kittie Krueger

The Greatest and most perfect of all the world's most famous and celebrated performers in every line. Her stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared. Her stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared.

# The Sparring Kangaroo

The greatest and most perfect of all the world's most famous and celebrated performers in every line. His stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared. His stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared.

Don't Forget we have the only Living Wonderful BOVALAPUS that strange Amphibious Beast of land and sea.

## AN ARMY OF MOST CELEBRATED TUMBLERS

and Leaders in the profession. 100 of the most famous and celebrated performers in every line.

## GRAND ROMAN ANCIENT HIPPODROME

Travelling throughout the world of Ancient Rome.

# A 3 - RING CIRCUS

Filled with Foreign and Home Artists.

## MOST COMPLETE MENAGERIE IN EXISTENCE!

Largest and most perfect of all the world's most famous and celebrated performers in every line. Their stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared. Their stunts are so perfect that they are not only admired but also feared.

FREE TO ALL!

Every day at 10 a. m. and 8 p. m. in the Grandstand high above the track. Admission will be 10c. for the day and 25c. for the week. Try an evening trial. Remember this is FREE. All at the show grounds.

•Absolutely and Undoubtedly the Greatest All Feature Shows•

Grand Street Parade at 10 a. m. 2 Performances daily at 2 and 8 p. m.

EXCUSSION RATES ON ALL RAILROADS.

## Neenah, Friday, June 4th.

Lemen Bros. newspaper advertisement used in 1897. Pfening Archives.

9]," the *Leader-Courier* noted. "In fact it was the largest crowd that has been in Kingman for a long time, some say since Ringling's show exhibited here five years ago. There were people in from all parts of the county. The show was not as mammoth as many had expected. The menagerie was a fizzle. They had 'Rajah' the elephant, who is heavier and a few inches taller than 'Jumbo' was, but the marvelous 'Bovalapus,' the 'mighty monster of the seas that sweats blood,' was not to be seen. The show people said the animal died while they were in Minnesota. The circus part of Lemen's show was fairly good as a whole and many of the features were excellent."

"Lemen Bros. Show drew a good crowd to town yesterday [Thursday, October 14]," according to the *Wilson County Sun*, Neodesha. "Their show is a good one of medium size and they claim to have had a very prosperous season."

In another story the *Sun* reported that the paper received \$12 for two insertions of a two-column ad.

The big news in the *Sun* concerned

a fight, "A gang of the Neodesha boys could not let the show people alone and consequently got into trouble which culminated about ten o'clock last night in a little free-for-all fight in the street near Houston's lumber yard. We know little about who was to blame except that in a general way showmen know better than to attack strictly peaceable citizens. A feud had in some way been engendered on the show grounds and a kind of running fight was made on a number of the show employees who started with a load of show paraphernalia from the grounds in the south-east part of town to the train near the Mo. Pacific depot. Stones were hurled at the wagons and finally the showmen retaliated. Charley Irving, who is not considered quarrelsome, but was in the crowd, was shot in the right leg breaking the bone. Kelly Greer was hammered over the head with a revolver. Aside from this nothing farther than a few bruises were sustained by either side. Both men were taken to Dr. Allen's office and their wounds dressed. Sheriff Bray was soon on the scene but an attempt to find and arrest the showman was without avail. Today the sheriff and Kelly Greer went to Sedan in pursuit of the man who did the shooting. The bullet has not yet been removed from Mr. Irving's leg and the bone is badly fractured but Dr. Allen hopes to be able to save it. We very much hope the sheriff will catch the fellow who did the shooting."

The *Neodesha Register*, October 22, ran the following: "Deputy Sheriff Roberge, accompanied by Stanley (sic) Greer, went to Sedan, Saturday morning, to secure if possible the persons who made the assault on Greer and Irving last Thursday night. The first person Greer saw when the train pulled into Sedan about 10 a. m. was the man who struck him standing near the depot. Mr. Roberge immediately seized him and read the warrant for his arrest. He began parleying and insisting that he be permitted to go to the show grounds to attend to some business. While they were parleying one of the Lemen brothers came up and took part in the conversation. Others of the showmen began gathering about and Roberge's prisoner kept edging away from him until at last the deputy and Greer became fearful of an effort being made to release the prisoner and started up town with him. The crowd closed in behind them and Greer says that Lemen jolted against Roberge with his shoulder, whereupon





Skelley, the prisoner broke and ran back through the crowd. Roberge had his revolver in his hand and took after the bird. The crowd closed in front of him, several of them with guns in their hands, but crying, 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot.' Roberge broke through and ran on. Several rocks were thrown at him, a small one hitting him on the head. Skelly attempted to run under a wire fence, but the wire caught him and before he could extricate himself Roberge nabbed him. While they were struggling the gang ran up and interfered in various ways, but the arrival of the sheriff of Chautauqua county and a deputy marshal, who came up on the run, dispersed the crowd and Roberge soon had his man in jail in Sedan. He brought him thence to Fredonia and lodged him in the Wilson county jail that night, where he still lies. Yesterday Sheriff Bray followed the show up with warrants for the arrest of the parties who interfered with his deputy and for the person or persons who shot Charley Irvin. So it looks as if the county would be called on to entertain a good part of Lemen's show for some

time yet. The fact is, that while some of our boys may have misbehaved the Lemens should get rid of the toughs and gamblers who are connected with them."

A trial at the county seat, Fredonia, on October 22, resulted in the dismissal of charges against Sherman Skelly, the circus man who was accused of striking Mr. Greer on the head with a revolver. The second show employee, James M. Crowe, charged with shooting Charley Irvin (sic) was expected to be released as positive identification was too difficult to prove.

The *Sedan Lance*, ignoring the arrest of the showmen, disposed of show day October 15, with one sentence, "Lemen Brothers' show drew a large crowd to Sedan Friday."

Early in October Lemen Brothers was interested in exhibiting at Pittsburg. The show's contracting agent decided to pass Pittsburg because of continuing conflicts with Ringling Brothers. The Lemen advertising car arrived in Pittsburg on the 6th but moved on to Siloam Springs, Arkansas. William Peck was in charge, assisted by Bert Wilson, W. E. Brown, C. Paling, Wm. Irwin, H. Bell, John Baxter, Dick McGuire and Harry Reed. The Pittsburg Headlight reported that Lemen brothers' "war with the Ringling Brothers must have been a severe one upon the Lemen Brothers and they lost several thousand dollars by their experience in what seems to be a two week attempt to burst up the Ringling show."

Lemen Brothers arrived in winter quarters at Argentine, Kansas, on October 20.

On November 4 the *Argentine Republic* reported that, "Last Friday, a reporter of THE REPUBLIC visited the winter quarters of Lemen Bros' shows and found the employes (sic) cleaning up and stowing away the paraphernalia and trappings in the immense caravansary. The Lemen Bros.' Have had a very profitable season with their shows and have recently purchased the buildings and grounds of their old quarters in the West End, and will now make Argentine their permanent headquarters. Some fifteen workmen have been employed ever since the show arrived putting in substantial improvements and repairing a portion of the old buildings. Major Frank Lemen, the senior member of the firm, informed the reporter that they expected to build several new dwellings immediately and would continue to build up the finest show quarters in the West. The business men of Argentine will be highly pleased to learn that Lemen have purchased property for it takes a vast amount of provender and provisions to sustain a show during the winter season."

Lemen Brothers' World's Best Shows in 1897 played these Kansas towns: May 1, Argentine (Opener); August 26, Walnut; 27, Coffeyville; 28, Parsons; September 23, Arkansas City; 24, El Dorado; 27, Osage City; 28, Garnett; 29, Yates Center; 30, Chanute; October 1, Iola; 2, Ottawa; 4, Strong City; 5, Newton; 6, Great Bend, (blown); 8, Larned; 9, Kingman; 14, Neodesha; 15, Sedan; 16, Chetopa; 20, Argentine, WQ.

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video Inc. Topeka, Kansas





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